



University  
of Glasgow

Brophy, Kenneth (1999) *The cursus monuments of Scotland*.  
PhD thesis.

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/2476/>

Copyright and moral rights for this thesis are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

# **The Cursus Monuments of Scotland**

**Kenneth Brophy**

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy, Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow,  
October 1999.**



## Abstract

This thesis is not just about the cursus monuments of Scotland, but is also about the way in which we practice archaeology. The loosely connected group of morphologically diverse sites which have been classed as cursus monuments by someone at some time form the starting point of my research. From a critique of the methodology behind archaeological typologies I go on to look at how we can start to think about escaping from constantly classifying the past in the present.

The complete *corpus* of cursus monuments in Scotland will be discussed at some length throughout the thesis, and listed in a gazetteer of fifty-six sites. The discussions on these sites will concentrate on the aerial photographic and excavation evidence and include recent discoveries and new interpretations. The report of a small excavation undertaken at a possible pit-defined cursus in Perthshire will be included and accounts of field visits of other sites. I will concentrate on deconstructing the class cursus. This will involve looking at how the evidence points away from these non-reflective typologies towards more fluid, ambiguous monuments related to everyday practice in the Neolithic.

There are four further themes of my research, all inter-twining. Firstly, a concentration on how we 'do' archaeology, considering the example of different ways of presenting excavation reports and excavating in general. Secondly, an emphasis will be placed on the involvement of phenomenology in archaeology, critically assessing previous attempts to do this in archaeology and attempting to explain and put into practice the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Thirdly I will look at the role we have in archaeology, and the ways in which our contexts, past experiences and future projects can effect the way we undertake field work and interpret. Finally the possibility of multiple interpretations will be considered, and a series of possible meanings for 'cursus' sites will be suggested. None of these will be a definitive interpretation and cannot be generally applied.

# Contents

## Part I : Introduction (Pre-Phenomenology)

<b>Chapter 1 : Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1. Introduction.....	2
1.2. Theory in the field.....	8
1.3. Themes.....	11
1.4. Structure.....	16
1.5. A work in progress.....	18
 <b>Chapter 2 : Site Typology.....</b>	 <b>19</b>
2.1. Introduction.....	19
2.2. How I classify 1.....	22
2.3. Definitions 1.....	24
2.4. How I classify 2.....	27
2.5. Why do we classify?.....	29
2.6. Definitions 2.....	30
2.7. How we classify monuments.....	31
2.8. Henge monuments.....	33
2.9. Cursus monuments.....	38
2.10. Discussion.....	41
 <b>Chapter 3 : The Cursus Monuments of Scotland.....</b>	 <b>44</b>
3.1. Introduction.....	44
3.2. Heightened powers of perception.....	46
3.3. Dumfries and Galloway.....	62
3.4. Central Scotland.....	66
3.4.1. Ayrshire.....	66
3.4.2. Lanarkshire.....	69

3.4.3. Stirlingshire.....	69
3.4.4. Lothian.....	74
3.5. Argyll.....	75
3.6. Tayside and Fife.....	75
3.7. The north east.....	96
3.8. Discussion.....	99

## **Chapter 4 : The Cursus Story :**

<b>Previous Approaches to Cursus Monuments.....</b>	<b>100</b>
4.1. Setting the scene.....	100
4.2. Antiquarians.....	101
4.3. Early excavations.....	103
4.4. Discovery and debate.....	104
4.5. Data collection.....	106
4.6. The long mound tradition.....	108
4.7. Archaeoastronomy.....	110
4.8. Fringe theories.....	112
4.9. Interpretative approaches.....	113
4.10. Discussion.....	115

## **Part 2 : Theory and Fieldwork (Phenomenology)**

<b>Chapter 5 : Phenomenology and Archaeology.....</b>	<b>118</b>
5.1. My interpretative framework.....	118
5.2. What is phenomenology.....	119
5.3. Why phenomenology?.....	121
5.4. Transcendental phenomenology.....	124
5.5. 'Towards a Heideggerian archaeology'.....	128
5.6. The involved phenomenology on Merleau-Ponty.....	135
5.6.1. The critique of the objectivist world.....	137
5.6.2. Perception.....	139
5.6.3. The body.....	141

5.6.4. Space.....	144
5.6.5. Merleau-Ponty and archaeology.....	146
5.7. Phenomenology of landscape and place.....	148
5.7.1. Phenomenology and geography.....	149
5.7.2. Phenomenology of landscape 1.....	151
5.7.3. Phenomenology of landscape 2.....	153
5.8. Conclusion.....	165

<b>Chapter 6 : Cursus Stories.....</b>	<b>166</b>
6.1. My stories.....	166
6.2. Cavens. A walk.....	167
6.3. Curriestanes. A walk.....	169
6.4. Broich. A walk.....	169
6.5. Balneaves Cottage. A walk.....	172
6.6. The Cleaven Dyke. A walk.....	172
6.7. Holm. A short walk.....	178
6.8. Eskdalemuir. Tom's Knowe.....	178
6.9. Kilmory. A walk.....	185
6.10. Old Montrose. Fieldwalking.....	185
6.11. Drybridge. A walk.....	188
6.12. Eskdalemuir. Lamb Knowe. A walk.....	191
6.13. Aerial stories. Perthshire and Angus.....	192
6.14. Hooray for Hollywood. Straight lines in a hermeneutic circle.....	195
6.15. Excavations at Milton of Rattray.....	210
6.16. Summing up.....	230

## **Part 3 : Interpretations**

<b>Chapter 7 : Landscape Themes.....</b>	<b>233</b>
7.1. 'Themes'.....	233
7.2. Landscape and Place.....	234
7.3. The proximity of water.....	239



7.4. <i>Cursus</i> and colour.....	248
7.5. Alignment and mis-alignment.....	254
7.6. Summing up.....	256

## **Chapter 8 : Architectural Themes..... 258**

8.1. Introduction.....	258
8.2. (Recti)linearity.....	259
8.3. Segmented construction and building events.....	260
8.4. Internal divisions.....	267
8.5. Parallelism.....	271
8.6. Contrasting sides.....	277
8.7. A focus on terminals - kinks, gigantism and pre-cursus activity.....	277
8.8. Alignments and being aligned on.....	282
8.9. Incorporation.....	284
8.10. Hybrids.....	286
8.11. Summing up.....	286

## **Chapter 9 : Towards a Post-processional Archaeology of Cursus Monuments.....288**

9.1. Introduction.....	288
9.2. Cursus monuments as symbolic rivers.....	289
9.3. Monuments of many colours.....	297
9.4. Colour biography of the Cleaven Dyke.....	303
9.5. Digging holes.....	308
9.6. Microcosms and miniatures.....	311
9.7. Using topography.....	312
9.8. Some thoughts about stone rows and fans.....	313
9.9. Doing their own thing.....	318

**Part 4 : Phenomenology and Archaeological Practice**

**Chapter 10 : How we ‘do’ archaeology.....322**

10.1. Tensions..... 322

10.2. Typology..... 324

10.2.1. Relationships with water.....326

10.2.2. Segmented construction.....330

10.2.3. Relationships with places..... 331

10.2.4. Embellishments..... 332

10.2.5. Colour..... 332

10.2.6. Neolithic themes..... 333

10.3. Excavation.....337

10.3.1. Objectivism.....339

10.3.2. Intellectualism.....342

10.3.3. The third way?.....346

10.3.4. Practical tensions..... 351

**Chapter 11 : Being-in-the-world-as-archaeologists.....354**

11.1. Being there..... 354

11.2. The Wheedale ‘Roman Road’. A walk..... 354

11.3. Me, experiencing the landscape..... 358

11.4. Conclusion.....367

11.5. Biographies.....370

**Appendices**

**Appendix I : Gazetteer of Cursus Monuments and Bank Barrows in  
Scotland.....373**

**Appendix II : Context Descriptions for Milton of Rattray Excavations,  
1997-8.....392**

**Bibliography.....394**

## **List of figures**

1.1	Typological groups of henges and pit-circles	6
1.2	Sketch view from within Milfield North henge	8
1.3	Barbara Bender's 'intellectual biography'	15
2.1	Typological grouping of cursus monuments	21
2.2	Classification v. Typology	25
2.3	Class I and Class II henges	35
2.4	Clare's matrix for henge classification	37
2.5	Loveday's cursus terminal typology	40
3.1	Location map of the cursus monuments of Scotland	45
3.2	List of Scotland's known cursus sites, 1995	49
3.3	Flight paths of RCAHMS sorties 1997-1998	50
3.4	Fourmerkland - plan	53
3.5	Holywood excavations 1997 – trench plans	58
3.6	Transcriptions of seven cursus monuments	64
3.7	Eskdalemuir bank barrow – plan	67
3.8	The possible East Linton cursus – manual transcription	70
3.9	Bannockburn excavations – trench plans	72
3.10	Pottery from Bannockburn and Douglasmuir	73
3.11	Upper Largie excavation – trench plan	76
3.12	Transcriptions of seven cursus monuments	78
3.13	Balneaves Cottage – transcription	79
3.14	Inchbare 1 - transcription	79
3.15	Woodhill – manual transcription	83
3.16	Star Inn Farm - transcription	83
3.17	Broich - transcription	88
3.18	The Cleaven Dyke – plan	93
3.19	Mains of Gourdie - transcription	95

4.1	Stukeley's sketch of Stonehenge cursus	102
4.2	McOmie's plan of the Cleaven Dyke	102
5.1	Tilley's phenomenology of the Dorset cursus	155
5.2	Tilley and Bender's walk in the Stonehenge landscape	158
5.3	Drayton cursus and landscape relationships	158
5.4	The hermeneutic circle	162
5.5	Karlsson - Thinking II	162
6.1	The Cleaven Dyke – field observations	173
6.2	Notes from a walk along Drylawhill	181
6.3	Old Montrose cropmark complex - transcription	187
6.4	Hollywood complex - field observations	198
6.5	Hollywood landscape alignments	200
6.6	Hollywood 2 to 12 Apostles - field observations	202
6.7	Milton of Rattray – location, transcription, trenches	214
6.8	Milton of Rattray – trench 4 pre-excavation plan	215
6.9	Milton of Rattray – F2 and F5 plans and sections	215
6.10	Milton of Rattray – F5 and F6 sections	228
6.11	Milton of Rattray – F3 section	228
7.1	Old Montrose reconstruction	243
7.2	Plan of the Rudston complex and landscape	246
8.1	Contour survey of the Cleaven Dyke	261
8.2	Douglasmuir – plan of excavated features	264
8.3	Bannockburn - plan of excavated features	266
8.4	Internal divisions – detail from transcriptions	272
8.5	Inchbare 2 – transcription	272
8.6	Fox Plantation - plan of some excavated features	278
8.7	Tom's Knowe – hachure plan of terminal	278



9.1	Loveday's cursus / river histograms	291
9.2	Achavanich - plan	314
9.3	Yarrows – plan	314
10.1	Blackshouse Burn – plan	328
10.2	An idealised context sheet	343
10.3	Extract from Milton of Rattray daybook	350
11.1	Darvill's Stonehenge landscape	363
11.2	Monument biographies	363

## **List of plates**

1.1	Involved archaeology 1 – defining Holywood 1 cursus	13
1.2	Involved archaeology 2 – fieldwalking Holywood 2	13
1.3	Involved archaeology 3 – me digging Holywood 1	15
3.1	Gallaberry aerial photograph	53
3.2	Tibbers aerial photograph	53
3.3	Holywood 1 and 2 aerial photograph	56
3.4	Excavations at Holywood 1	59
3.5	Excavations at Holywood 2	59
3.6	Excavations at Holm	61
3.7	Excavations at Holm	61
3.8	Springbank aerial photograph	65
3.9	Redbank aerial photograph	65
3.10	Lamb Knowe aerial photograph	68
3.11	Preston Mains aerial photograph	70
3.12	Douglasmuir excavations aerial photograph	82
3.13	Loch of Liff aerial photograph	84
3.14	Blairhall aerial photograph	87
3.15	The Cleaven Dyke aerial photograph	90
3.16	Tullichettle aerial photograph	92
3.17	Kilmany aerial photograph	95
3.18	Mill of Fintray aerial photograph	97
3.19	Muirton aerial photograph	98
6.1	Criffel viewed along Cavens ‘cursus’	168
6.2	Walking along Curriestanes with cows	168
6.3	Walking along Broich – looking S	171
6.4	Walking along Broich – looking S	171
6.5	Walking along the Cleaven Dyke – NW terminal	176

6.6	Walking along the Cleaven Dyke – cropmarks	176
6.7	Walking along the Cleaven Dyke – central mound	177
6.8	Walking along the Cleaven Dyke – SE terminal	177
6.9	The Nith valley viewed from Holm	179
6.10	Tom’s Knowe terminal	179
6.11	Walking along Drylawhill – looking E	182
6.12	Walking along Drylawhill – looking E	182
6.13	Walking along Drylawhill – looking W	183
6.14	Walking along Drylawhill – looking W	183
6.15	Walking along Kilmany – looking W from W terminal	184
6.16	Walking along Kilmany – looking E from W terminal	184
6.17	Walking along Drybridge – looking S	189
6.18	Walking along Drybridge – looking S	189
6.19	Walking along Drybridge – looking S	190
6.20	Walking along Drybridge – looking S from S terminal	190
6.21	Walking along Lamb Knowe – view S	193
6.22	Walking along Lamb Knowe – view S	193
6.23	Walking along Holywood 1 (with overlay)	197
6.24	Walking along Holywood 2	197
6.25	View from the Holywood 2 – 12 Apostles walk	202
6.26	View from the Holywood 2 – 12 Apostles walk	202
6.27	Milton of Rattray – F1 section	219
6.28	Milton of Rattray – F3 pre-excavation	219
6.29	Milton of Rattray – F5	220
6.30	Milton of Rattray – F4 post-excavation	220
6.31	Milton of Rattray – trench 4 looking W	223
6.32	Milton of Rattray – trench 5 looking W	223
7.1	River Nith flooding viewed from Holm	241
7.2	River shining in the sun	250
7.3	Tom’s Knowe terminal	252

8.1	Ditch segments visible as cropmarks – detail	268
8.2	Bennybeg aerial photograph	273
8.3	Monktonhall aerial photograph	275
9.1	Colour and the Cleaven Dyke 1	306
9.2	Colour and the Cleaven Dyke 2	306
9.3	Post-hole at Holm	309
9.4	Achavanich	309
10.1	Castlerigg stone circle	329
10.2	Castlerigg stone circle	329
10.3	Milton of Rattray – the empty trench	341
10.4	Milton of Rattray – the inhabited trench	341
11.1	Walking along Wheeldale ‘roman road’	356
11.2	Walking along Wheeldale ‘roman road’	356
11.3	Postcard of Springfield cursus, Essex	369



## Acknowledgements

There are many people and organisations to thank for their help during the four years of my research. Financially, my fees for the first year of study were paid by the Carnegie Trust. They were also willing to continue this assistance until I was awarded the William and Margaret Kesson Award through the Arts Faculty at Glasgow University. This provided full funding for the second and third years of the PhD. For this support I am extremely grateful. The PhD was supervised by Colin Richards.

The excavations at Milton of Rattray were carried out with the financial support of Archaeological Research Projects and a University of Glasgow Graduate Award. Equipment was provided by Historic Scotland and Glasgow University Department of Archaeology, who also provided transport. Nan and George Bethune loaned a dumpy level for the 1997 season. Labour came in the form of Andrew Baines, Gordon Barclay, Robert Lennox, Sam McKeand and Gordon Maxwell, all of whom gave their time and efforts voluntarily. The illustrations were inked up by Sam McKeand. A transcription was provided at short notice by Lorna Sharpe. Finally, the good will and enthusiasm of Mr Robert Campbell, the farmer, made it all possible, as did his loan of a JCB and driver for a day in the 1998 season.

The fieldwalking at Old Montrose was mostly organised by Eland Stuart and funded by Historic Scotland and the Carnegie Trust. Fieldwalking at Holywood 2 was with the help of Andrew Baines, Andrew Jones and Hannah Sackett. Other fieldwork, including site visits, was in the presence of either Andrew Baines, Douglas Gaylor or Rob Lennox. My thanks to Nan and George Bethune who provided bed and board during fieldwork in Caithness. During that fieldwork, funded by a Graduate Award, I was helped by Andrew Baines and spent a day in the knowledgeable company of George Watson.

Many people have contributed to the thought process of this PhD, either by reading early drafts and papers, or through conversation. Thanks for this goes to Andrew Baines, Gordon Barclay, John Barrett, Chris Fowler, Strat Halliday, Andrew Jones,

William Kilbride, Roy Loveday, Gavin MacGregor, Gordon Maxwell, Alex Morrison, Colin Richards, Jim Rideout and Julian Thomas. Thanks also to those who have helped with various queries over the years – Moira Greig, Mark Hall, Rod McCullagh and John Terry. General help with illustrations was provided by the RCAHMS, but specific thanks to Andrew Baines (fig. 3.1), Kevin MacLeod (figs. 3.12 and 6.6) and Bob Adam (plate 7.2).

Finally the completion of this PhD would not have been possible without the support of Jan and Michael (over the last few weeks especially). Also, my parents who have put up with my desire to continue being a student for far longer than they envisaged and I will always be grateful for that. A special thank you to Jan for proof-reading, removing commas, trying to sort out my English and for putting up with me. Without the support and encouragement of Gordon Barclay, this thesis would not have been possible – thanks.

**PART 1. INTRODUCTION (PRE-PHENOMENOLOGY)**

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.

### 1.1. Introduction

*“Inside the van, stencilled above the driver’s head, was yet another sign: ‘No condition is permanent’ it said, whether warning or comfort I could not tell”* Foden (1998, 1).

Cursus monuments have been described as the “undeniable cinderellas of British archaeology” (Loveday 1985, vii), a ‘problem’ (Hedges and Buckley 1981), and more recently, ‘enigmatic’ (Barclay and Harding 1999a) and ‘gigantic’ (Brophy 1999a). They have come under increasing scrutiny in the 1990’s, being the sole subject of a *Neolithic Studies Group* meeting and monograph (Barclay and Harding 1999b), and the ongoing *Cursus Environs: Britain and Beyond* (CEBAB) project, cataloguing all known cursus sites in north-west Europe, and managing more detailed site interventions. So what can I offer here from my research to this wider, and increasingly informed, debate, on what are undeniably mysterious and still little known sites?

Perhaps it is best that I commence by discussing what this thesis is not intended to be. It certainly will not repeat the excellent research of Roy Loveday, whose as yet unpublished thesis, *The cursus monuments and related sites of the British Neolithic* (1985) includes an exhaustive attempt to look for the architectural origins of cursus sites, as well as detailed morphological similarities (and variations) within the monument class itself. Nor is it intended to be, as Hedges and Buckley’s 1981 paper (*Springfield cursus and the cursus problem*) was, merely the story so far, a summation of all that is known and a list of excavated sites.

In fact, looking in more detail at other studies of prehistoric monument *types*, it is clear that these concerns are shared across many such studies. The following themes of a typical (what I would call a *type-ical*) ‘prehistory corpora’ have been garnered from such relatively recent examples of the *genre* (in no particular



order) as Harding and Lee (1987) on henge monuments, Topping (1982) and Loveday (1985) on cursus monuments, Tolan (1988) on pit-circles in Scotland, Gibson (1994, 1999) on timber circles, Kinnes (1992) on non-megalithic long barrows, Barnatt (1989) on stone circles, Davidson and Henshall (1989, 1991) on chambered cairns in Scotland, and Burl on stone rows (1993) and four-posters (1988). These are not glossy ‘guides to’ books for the lay reader as well as professional (see for instance Burl on stone circles (1995) or the Shire guide books)), but are bodies of research specifically focused on a perceived *type*.

There is usually a concern with definitions, which tend to have been seen as too general, and need to be clarified and the boundaries tightened as to what sites can be acceptably given a certain label. Loveday (1985) notes his entirely justified belief that cursus was becoming a ‘catch-all’ phrase. His final definition of a cursus is rather long and ungainly, stretching to cover the variety of sites (and in a sense, ignore that variety in a conforming norm). Barclay & Harding comment that, “...the emphasis was upon similarities over and above any apparent differences” (1999a, 1). The sheer variety of sites collected by Harding and Lee (1987) as possible henge monuments out-stripped the expectations of the authors, who found great difficulty deciding what to exclude and include. They tended to give most potential sites the benefit of the doubt as it were. Again, their attempt to clearly define what is / was a henge resulted only in a continued blurring at the edges of the category.

Monument studies tend to have a heavy typological bias. Striving for a definition is the search for commonalities, for defining characteristics that separate one monument type from another. Internally, such research has a beating typological heart, because by its very nature it excludes sites that do not belong to a certain type from detailed analysis. Interpretation begins before the corpus is even put together - it begins with the conception of the project. Differences between sites are also stressed, but often to enable the sub-dividing typologies, rather than considering the roles of local needs, intentionalities, agency or even regional variations.

Superficial morphology is very important to these discussions. Davidson and Henshall (1989, 1991) commence the discussion of the sites themselves in their chambered cairns inventories with descriptions of cairn and chamber types. Loveday (1985) has a complete chapter devoted to the attributes of cursus morphology, and the potential of these for typological frameworks. After presenting his gazetteer, Kinnes (1992) has an early chapter discussing 'ditch forms' and 'mound dimensions'. Burl's (1993) exhaustive account of stone rows in Britain and Brittany is divided into chapters each dealing with a different kind of stone setting.

They share a concern with statistics, and the text is often broken up by a series of histograms, pie charts, scatter diagrams and models. The jargon, as well as the representational forms and analysis of statistics, is present. "The size of the circles and the numbers of pits were plotted to make a scatter diagram. The relationship has a Pearson Product Moment Co-efficient of 0.7", Tolan (1988, 24) helpfully observes. Means and norms are established. Topping (1982), in a short discussion on cursus monuments, calculated the average length, width, and ditch dimensions of some of England's cursus monuments. For instance, the average length of these sites is 2087.7m. Loveday's thesis includes illustrations such as 'histogram of transverse dimensions' and 'cursus alignment relative to nearest river' (1985). League tables of dimensions are established or at least alluded to (the biggest stone circle, the fifth largest henge, longest, shortest, highest and so on, as if the relative dimensions of two sites hundreds of miles apart had real significance in prehistory).

These statistics are abstract, often meaningless observations about the monuments, drawing together a series of measurements, orientations, or the numbers of things from sites across wide geographical areas, and from these drawing conclusions which probably have no relation to the use of the monuments. Although the relative dimensions (and worker hours) have been thought to form part of social evolution in the Neolithic of Wessex (Renfrew

1973), it is becoming increasingly apparent that the local context of a monument may well be more worthy of consideration than grand schemes and narratives (see for instance Bender 1992; Bradley & Chambers 1988; Darvill 1997).

There is also an obsession with origins, whether architectural, social or cultural. Tilley (1999) in a discussion on the use and abuse of the term megalith in archaeological literature lists several *genres* of monument studies, one of which is the search for common origins for a specific monument type. This is typified by Hodder's *Domestication of Europe* (1990), where he postulates an origin for European long houses in the near East, and a rather different set of ideas is applied to these monuments by Bradley (1998a) but with a similar evolutionary conclusion. Loveday (1985) also examines a linear monument tradition, spending much of his thesis exploring the origins of cursus monuments in much smaller rectilinear structures such as 'long mortuary enclosures'.

Finally, many of these collections represent the monuments in rather abstract ways. The classic inventory illustration is a plan or aerial photographic rectification, decontextualised from the surrounding landscape and any 'archaeological traces'. These are often collected together - "small postage-stamp line diagrams or line plans, set side by side for comparative purposes" (Tilley 1999, 97-8). Whilst a site plan can be a useful thing to refer to when reading descriptive text, when placed in a kind of typological 'line-up', all too often the usual suspect seems to be to justify or illustrate a monument type. Parts of sites are further decontextualised from the 'site' as a whole, usually for the purposes of sub-dividing the wider class. This can be seen in the disembodied site plans of Clare (1986) or Tolan (1988) (fig. 1.1) or the idealised terminals highlighted by Loveday (fig. 2.5).

I would argue, then, that the research of a particular monument type, and the production of a discussion and gazetteer, is a classic processualist phenomena. (Earlier (pre-processual) attempts to group together monuments, admittedly with much smaller databases to work with, had less exclusivist ideals. Piggott &



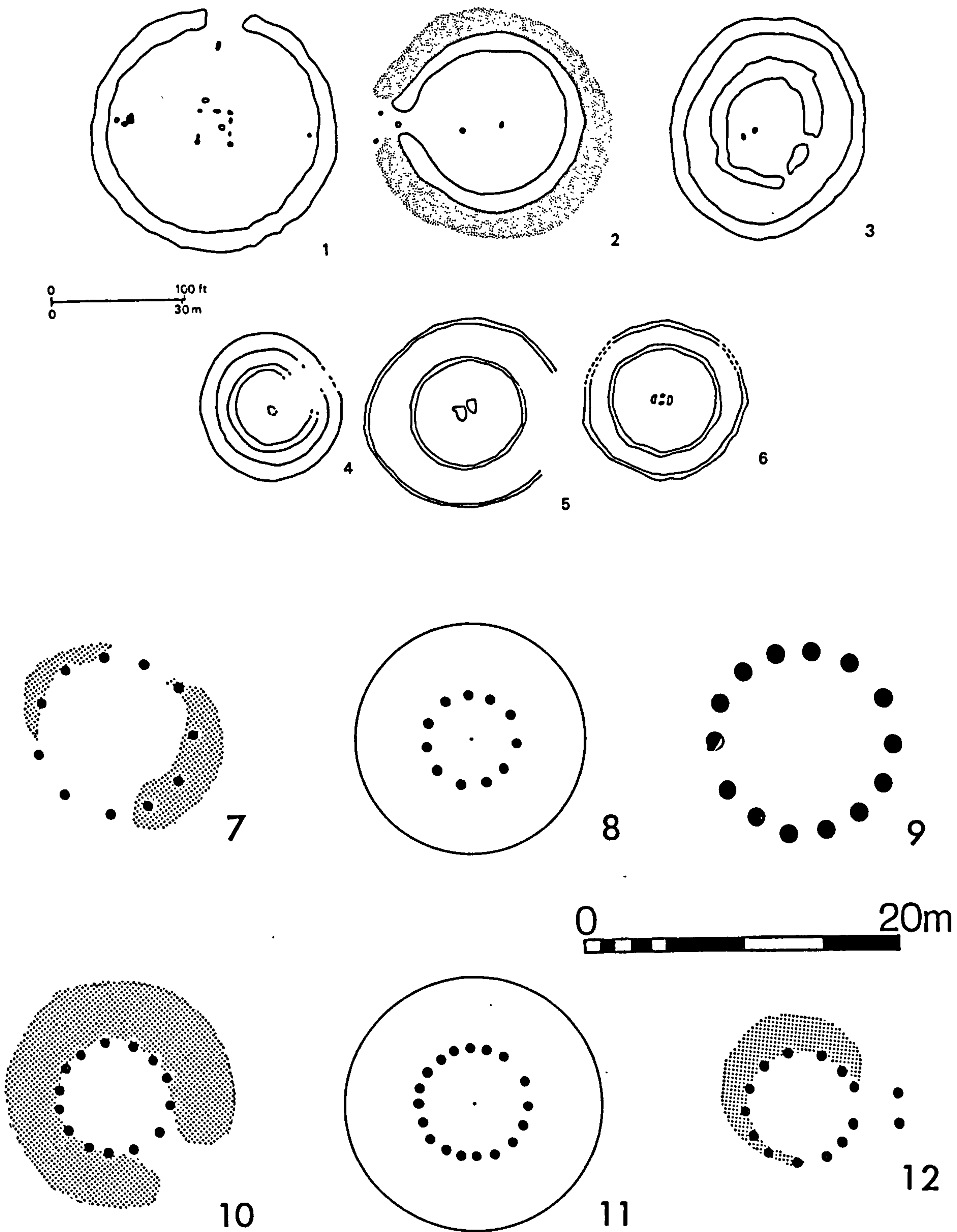


Figure 1.1 Typological groupings of henges representing Clare's subtype h (1-6); and some pit circles of Scotland (7-12). (After Clare 1986, fig.7 and Tolan 1988, fig.2).

Piggott (1939) listed earth (henge) and stone circles in the same paper, whilst Stone's list of monuments similar to Stonehenge later cursus (1947) included a site regarded as a bank barrow). The process of data collection and presentation follows the little acknowledged subjectivity of what site to include in the gazetteer. The presentation of line drawing at the same scale (with the top of the page representing a northern orientation) is an attempt to refine the class and our understanding of these monuments through an objective depiction of each site. Loveday prefaces his thesis with the statement, "the 1:10560 and 1:2500 surveys rather than the meandering text are offered as a contribution to the final resolution of the [cursus] problem" (1985, vii) (fig. 2.1) as if these 'objective' illustrations can hold more truth than his 'subjective' interpretations ever could. (Indeed it is through this almost unseen *tension* between the objective and the subjective that a post-processional study of a monument type may begin to emerge).

These techniques and aims are of course, generalisations, and some monument studies do contain more than bald statistics. Harding and Lee (1987) in a volume mostly devoted to a large *corpus* of henge monuments (and 'related' sites), include a discussion on the role of monuments in a wider social and topographical landscape. The concept of 'ritual landscapes' is questioned, and re-worked into 'sacred geography', where areas of life seen by archaeologists as sacred and profane are played out across the landscape, with monumental complexes part of daily life, not set apart and inaccessible.

They include an interesting illustration (fig. 1.2), a reconstruction of a view *from* a henge to the exterior horizon and world. This is a participant's view suggesting that what was visible was controlled to some extent, but could still be open to interpretation. "It is necessary to consider just what henge-users would have seen from these monuments" (*ibid.* 36). (Compare with the framed vision experiments in house doorways at Leskernick, Dartmoor (Bender *et al* 1996)). This is not merely for astronomical observations, but could include looking out towards natural features, from hilltops to trees. They were, after all, monuments with



experiencing participants. This is not easily reflected either in a 1:2500 scale plan, a sketch or an aerial photographic view. To capture this *involved* level of archaeological participation within a cropmark site only visible from the air involves a great degree of subjectivity and imagination, more so than for earthwork sites. Perhaps this is why it has been so rarely attempted.

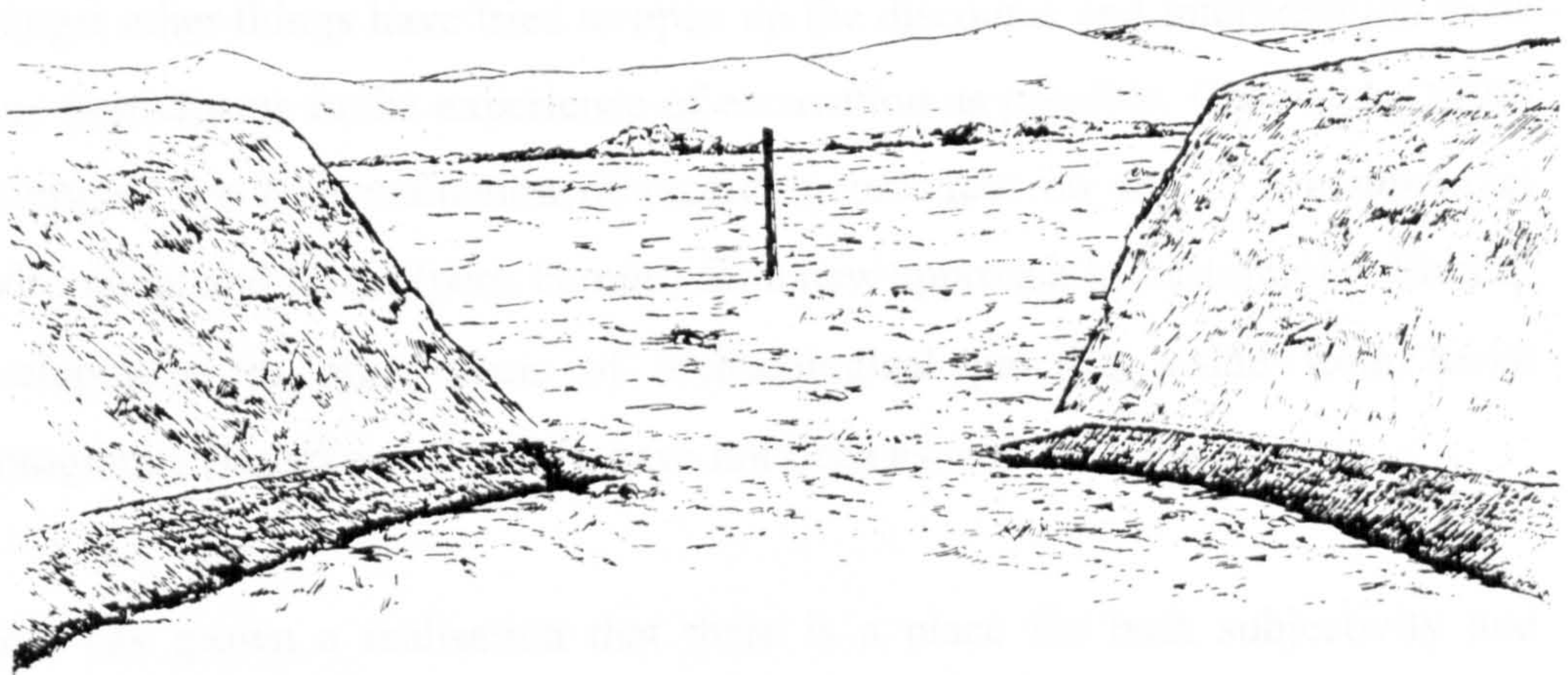


Figure 1.2 The view from within Milfield North henge, as sketched by K McBarron (from Harding & Lee 1987).

### 1.2. Theory in the field

It has often been a criticism of post-processual theoretical archaeology that it is detached from archaeological reality. This may be a result of the fact that this is where livelihoods are at issue, and contracts are there to be won and lost (Hassan 1997; Knapp 1996). Only in the last few years have theoretical ideas begun to influence the way some of us 'do' archaeology. Previously, theory was very



much confined to the re-interpretation of excavation results, almost always gathered by tried and tested empirical techniques under the very intellectual climates that were being reacted to (see for instance Richards & Thomas 1984; C Richards 1990; Thomas 1990 and others).

This is now being changed, nowhere more so than the methodological approaches to excavation, that most empirical of disciplines. Hodder at çatalhöyük (1997) and Bender *et al* at Leskernick (1996) have put theory into practice. They have stressed the truly subjective nature of excavating, and amongst other things have tried to open up the discourse and interpretation to as many participants in the experience of excavation as possible. Chadwick (1998) has argued for a re-evaluation of recording practices on site in a commercial environment and Lucas (pers. comm.) for a new approach to stratigraphy. Similar developments in other areas of archaeological practice, aside from aerial photography (Raczkowski 1999), have not been as well developed.

There has grown a realisation that there is a place for both subjectivity and objectivity in our archaeological social theory. At one extreme, New Archaeology strove for, and presented the facade of, objectivity, whilst recent post-processualist writings were becoming increasingly abstracted from the material record itself, or sat uncomfortably with it. This is typified by the work on Heideggerian phenomenology, reaching its acme with Karlsson (1997, 1998).

Instead, what is needed is a 'third way' between these two extremes, steering a course between pure subjectivity and objectivity, and drawing on both. French existentialist philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty set out to do just that. He did this by examining human experiences and the contrasting responses to these of both objectively and subjectively rooted disciplines in a highly critical manner. He termed these extremes empiricism and intellectualism (1962), and from this dialectic moved to a 'third way' of explaining the experience, drawing ideas from both. There is clearly room for such a dialectic to be played out in archaeology. Bradley commented recently that, "the practice of archaeology is not as objective

as field workers would like to believe, nor is it as subjective as theorists often suppose. Its procedures employ a mixture of objectivity and subjectivity” (1998a, 3).

Shanks (1992) proposed the existence in archaeology (almost always implicit and ignored) of *tensions*, where archaeological ‘crafts’ employ the processual and post-processual, modernist and post-modernist. This is the tension of a theoretically minded archaeologist interpreting cropmarks on aerial photographs (see chapters 3 and 8), visiting sites (chapter 6), fieldwalking (chapter 6) and excavating (chapters 6 and 10). Shanks argues that archaeological endeavour is much more than a dry scientific process, it involves *involved* people with stories to tell of their experiences. Just look at work such as Tilley’s walk along the Dorset cursus (1994), or Bender’s personal involvement in the discussions over the ‘ownership’ of Stonehenge (1998), or Edmonds’ Neolithic narratives (1999). Yet at the same time we cannot ignore the ‘empirical reality of the past’ (Shanks 1992, 180).

As he discusses, we (as archaeologists) have responsibilities to our colleagues and wider audience(s), and here again the *tension* underlies everything, the balance between communication and informing, against the examination of given concepts and preconceptions. This is the tension of a ‘prehistory corpora’, where typologies are developed to simplify the communication of an idea, and yet fail to critically develop the assumptions and values of these labels. (They are useful as reference volumes). This is the tension of a collected list of morphologically similar sites, which simultaneously fails to clearly define the boundaries of a monument class, yet reinforces the *reality* of that class on every page.

I hope in this volume to produce what Shanks (1992) would call a ‘sublation’ of these dichotomies, and Tilley (1999) referred to as a fusion of the subjective and objective. It reflects the hermeneutic spiral which one progresses through during the course of any research. The phenomenological framework of Merleau-Ponty, developed in more detail in chapter 5, allows such an approach in terms of the



nature of perception, and how people see and interact with the world. I intend to partake in such an interactive, phenomenologically aware archaeology (see Brophy and MacGregor forthcoming). In doing this I am simultaneously free to interpret my experiences, and yet also constrained by the physical reality of the 'site', the landscape (both past and present), and by myself. *I* experience the cursus, and yet it allows me to experience it by being there.

### 1.3. Themes

With this rather brief preamble in mind, I will now go on to develop the themes (and aims) of my research and this thesis. These themes can be seen as both distinct and yet interwoven and should be viewed in contrast to the concerns of earlier monuments studies outlined earlier (section 1.1).

1. Typology. My study group is 'the cursus monuments of Scotland' which are an ill-defined group of sites loosely linked morphologically. They have been included because they are all sites called cursus by some one at some time.

My aim in bringing these sites together is neither to produce a definitive definition of what a cursus is, nor to decide what is or is not a cursus. Nor will I be providing a guide for the future identification of such sites. Rather I will attempt to explore how we, as archaeologists, can begin to move beyond such typological labels. By gathering together the sites discussed in chapter 3 (and listed in the gazetteer) it is hoped that this will illustrate the problems with the term and all it stands for by exploring what cursus actually means and whether this really matters. I am fascinated by how we so uncritically pigeonhole sites from the past.

Throughout the thesis, the usage of the term *cursus* in italics refers to the loosely applied label given to many different rectilinear enclosures in Scotland, whilst cursus (in normal type) is the traditional monument type ideal as commonly applied across the British (and now Irish) Neolithic.

2. How we ‘do’ archaeology. This theme makes explicit the *tensions* discussed earlier, and can be found in the discussions on typology (communicative tool versus uncritical label). I will also think about fieldwork where my actions were to an extent driven by empirical methodologies, the results of which I am free to interpret subjectively. This research has not been undertaken sitting in front of a computer, or reading books. I have undertaken fieldwalking, site visits, aerial reconnaissance, and two seasons of excavation, as well as participating in the excavations of several other sites (Plates 1.1 to 1.3).

Accounts of fieldwork are presented in different ways. The excavation is presented within a Merleau-Ponty-like critique of objectivist and subjective excavation methodologies and subsequent reports. This will involve an attempt to write a ‘third way’ report. Field visits are presented as a series of narratives and stories, or as hermeneutical spirals.

3. Phenomenology. The recent usage of phenomenological philosophies in archaeology will be discussed, from the simple experiential (uncritical) phenomenology of Tilley (1994, 1999) to the ontological (existential) phenomenology proposed by Thomas (1996a, 1996b).

The ideas of Merleau-Ponty, particularly those set out in *Phenomenology of perception* (1962) will be used not only to help with fieldwork, but also with interpretations of experiences in the field and structuring these interpretations. His ideas of the *lived* (experiencing) *body*, and about the physical world, the senses, texture, colour and light can help us to understand how we are constrained beings. We are interpretative beings when we go about our everyday life, and in our being-in-the-world-as-archaeologists. His dialectical approach, critiquing objectivism and then subjectivism, is mirrored in areas of this thesis (see, for instance, chapters 6 and 10; see also Brophy & MacGregor forthcoming). He saw life, and how we experience it, as ambiguous.



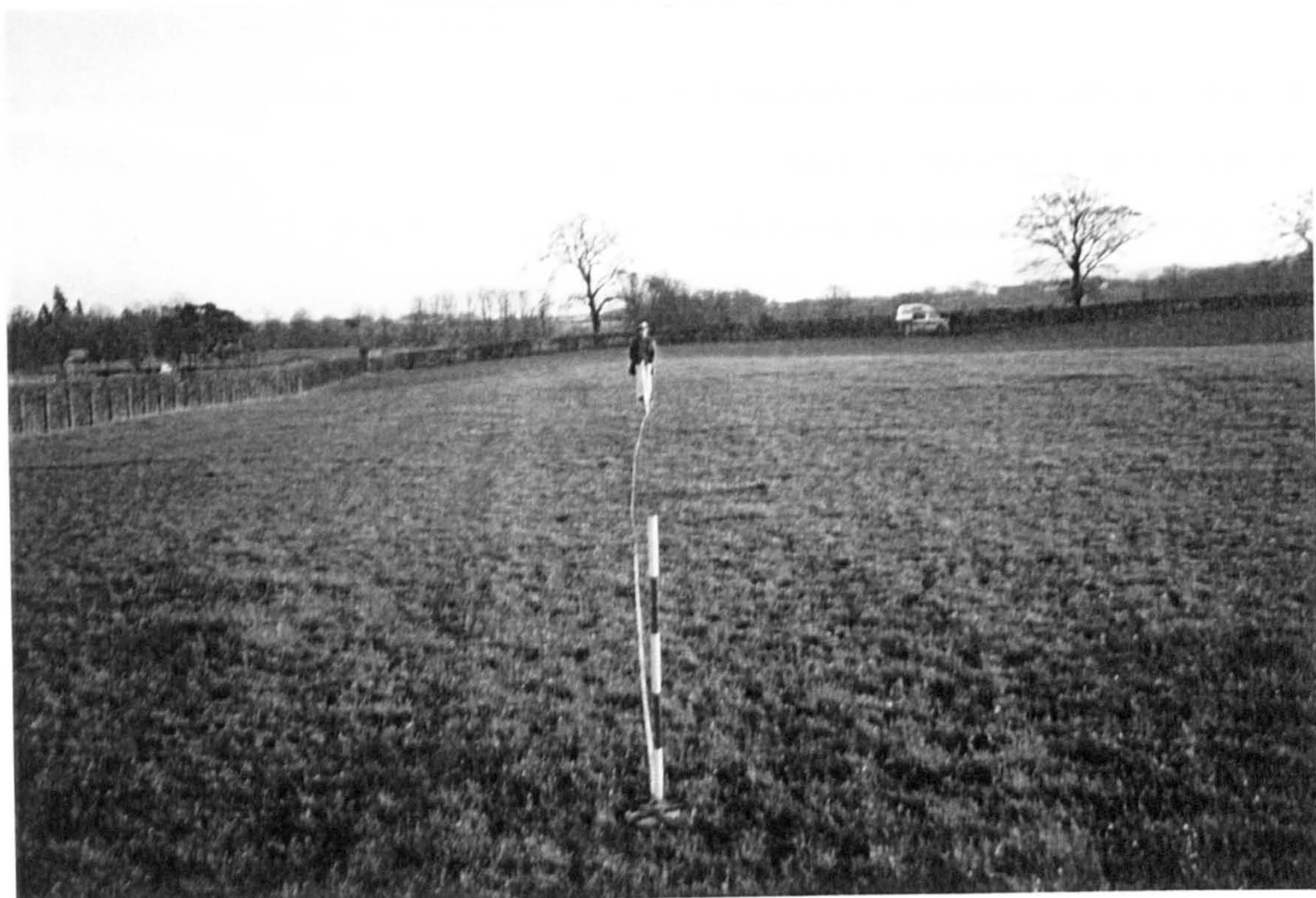


Plate 1.1 Involved archaeology 1. Taping out Hollywood 2  
cursus in preparation for walking along it.  
Plate 1.2 Involved archaeology 2. Fieldwalking at  
Hollywood 2.



Finally, I will consider the value of phenomenology to archaeologists, and how far we can go with it. Is it really possible to have a meaningful ‘third way’ in archaeological practice? Yes, because it *demand*s we practice archaeology in a more reflective and self-critical way. It demands that we are involved in the world (Plates 1.1 to 1.3).

4. What I bring to these sites. Hodder (1992) belatedly saw his excavations and fieldwork at Haddenham causewayed enclosure as part of a hermeneutic circle he had already entered before the excavation, and was still in years after. Bradley writes, “the observations made in the field are not discussed because they are taken for granted” (1998a, 3). Bender (1998) writes an introductory chapter in cartoon form telling the reader who she thinks she is (Fig. 1.3).

What are we bringing to an excavation, to fieldwalking, to site visits, or when we look at an aerial photograph? This must matter because it effects how we experience these traces of the past in the present due to *our* past. We have special archaeological knowledge about the context and surrounding sites. Our typological labels give us preconceptions. We are expecting something, some kind of outcome, a resolution or achieving our goal. We have an agenda, and this is all too often ignored. Why do we do the things we do? What are our motivations, expectations, hopes, fears?

We must also think about what we do not bring to the excavation. What we cannot see, what we cannot know, what we can never know. What are the limitations and special knowledge we bring into the present from our pasts when studying the past?

5. Interpretations. After the phenomenological experience come interpretations. Experiences of material culture have been likened to the reading of a text (for more detailed arguments see Moore 1990; Tilley 1990, 1991; Thomas 1991 and others), and whilst this straight analogy is rather simplistic, there is more than a degree of polysemy when interpreting archaeological traces. This meaning is, as





● Spade work . . . Kenny Brophy examines more closely the ancient trench.

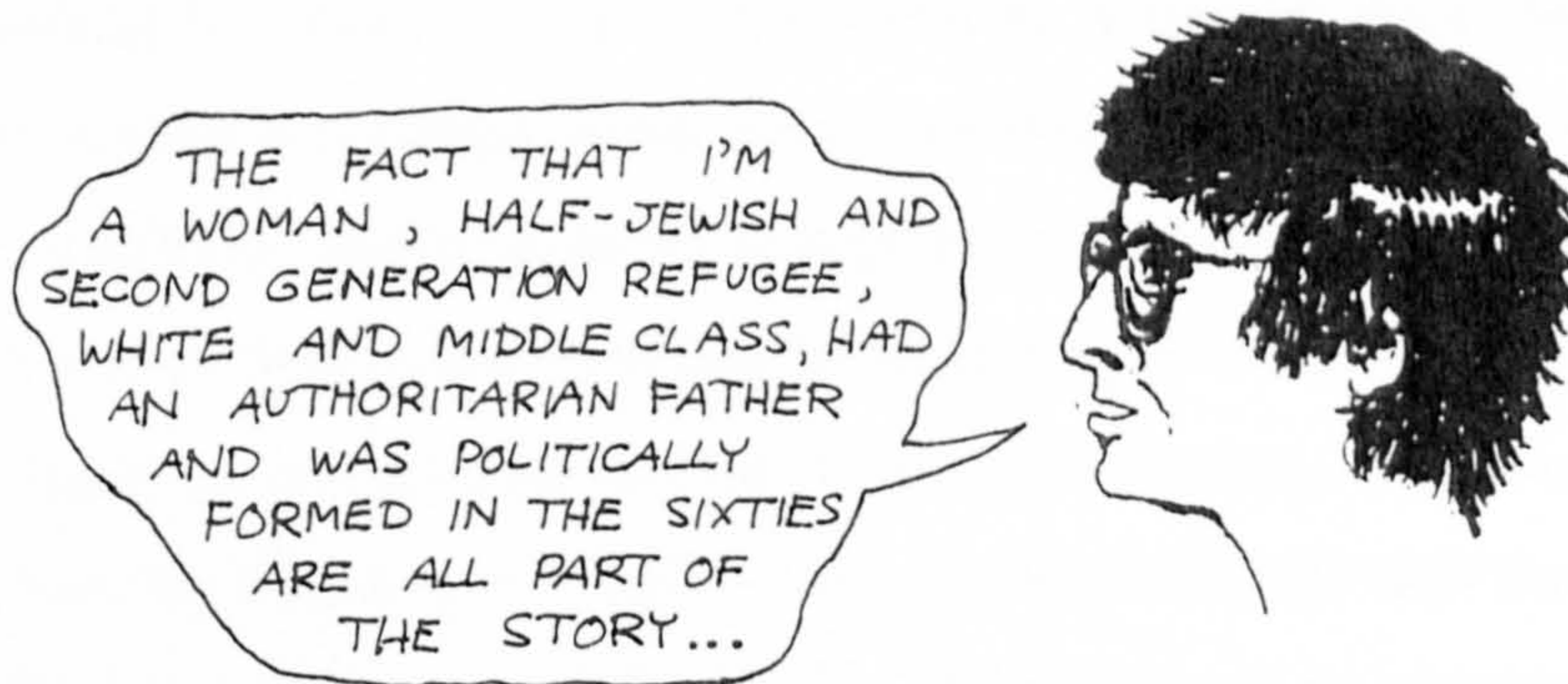
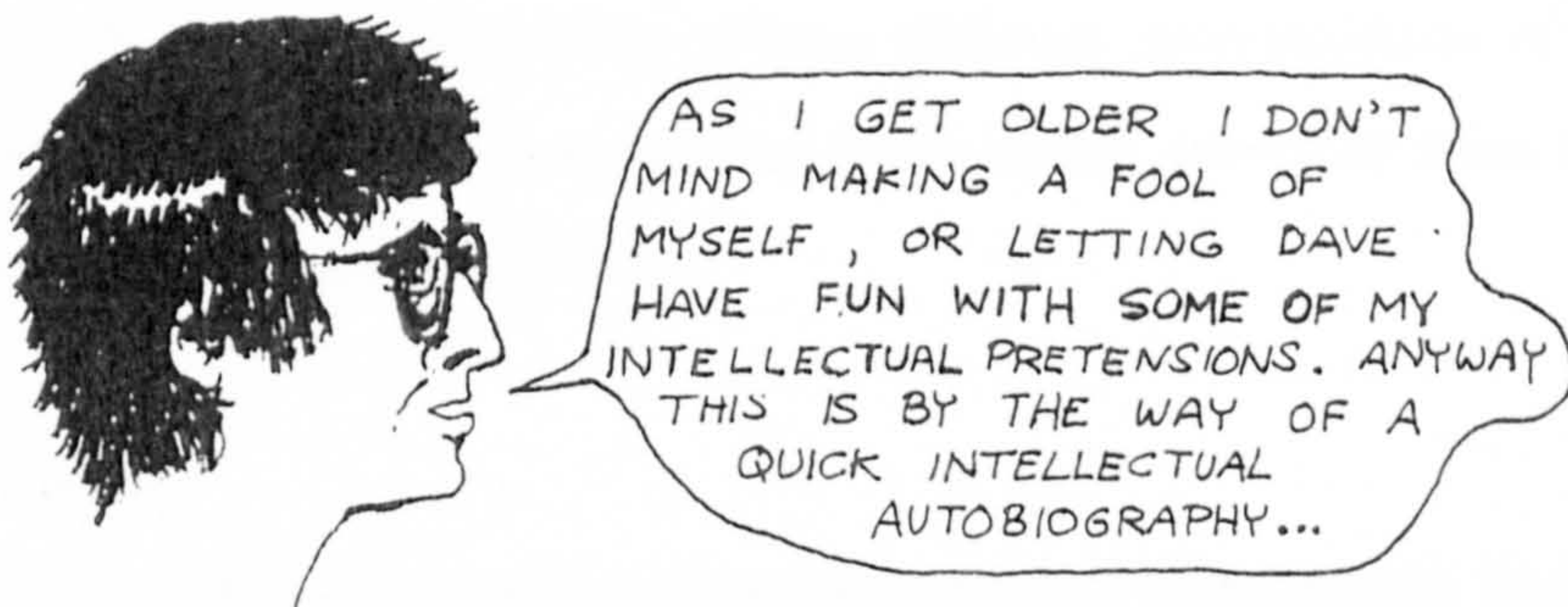


Plate 1.3 (top) Involved archaeology 3. Me digging at Hollywood 1 cursus captured by the Dumfries Courier, August 1997.

Figure 1.3 (bottom) Involved archaeology 4. Barbara Bender's 'intellectual autobiography' (from Bender 1992, 13).



Barrett states, not inherent but rather read into the material (1994). (I do not believe that a cursus was merely a piece of text, although it may have been a metaphor for many other things, from features of the natural world, to a story or the history of a social group).

It is certainly not an objective of mine to produce one definitive, and generalised, interpretation of *cursus* monuments in Scotland, nor is this possible. The ambiguity of the monuments, the ability of different readings, through time as well as between contemporary people, means that some sites will have several interpretations from me alone. Others will have none, unfathomable and unreadable. It is certainly possible to have different interpretations of the same site (Tilley 1991). My ideas about what some cursus sites may have meant are not generalised, and are possibilities.

### 1.4. Structure

How do I intend to argue and develop these points? The opening four chapters are the context from which the research has emerged. This chapter sets out the main intersecting five themes of my research and the remaining three chapters of Part 1 look at prior knowledge of the sites. The second chapter deals with the intellectual conditions which made the emergence of monument types to happen and why this is an inadequate response to discussing a group of sites. It is a critique of typology and an introduction to the evolution and refinement of the concept of a cursus monument. Chapter 3 is a description of the sites themselves that are collected together as a result of the ideas discussed in chapter 2. Any work previously undertaken on them is discussed. Finally, chapter 4 is a description of interpretations of cursus sites over the past few centuries, with an assessment of the weaknesses of some of these approaches.

Part 2 describes my response to this body of archaeological knowledge and the sites themselves. In chapter 5 the recent introduction of phenomenology into archaeology is discussed as well as a brief description of earlier influences on modern phenomenology. I will then go on to look at some length at some

aspects of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) that I feel are relevant to my fieldwork and archaeology in general. These are ideas for both methodology and interpretation. Finally I will discuss phenomenologies of landscape in human geography and archaeology and present a critique of these. Chapter 6 recounts my fieldwork at the *cursus* monuments over a five-year period, from walks along sites to excavation. These are presented chronologically or as case studies designed to illustrate the refinement and self-critique which accompanied this work.

Although there is inevitably some degree of interpretation involved in the descriptions of the fieldwork, this is addressed more explicitly in Part 3. Chapters 7 and 8 are collections of observations gathered from the fieldwork, excavations and aerial photograph interpretation. These seem to be common to a few, or many of the *cursus* sites and range from the exploitation of topographical features (chapter 7) to architectural techniques (chapter 8). These chapters are divided into the modern nature / culture divide which will be critiqued at the end of chapter 8. These observations will be drawn together in chapter 9 as a series of interpretations of the sites which are not intended to be generalised answers but suggestions and possibilities. Hopefully, parts 2 and 3 can help us to move beyond the commonly suggested processional way interpretation to think more about the ambiguity and fluidity of meaning at these places.

Part 4 will be more concerned with the implications for archaeological practice from my research. In chapter 10 I will address two areas of archaeology which are commonly regarded as objective and scientific – typology and excavation. Through a wider discussion of the themes discussed in chapters 7 and 8 I hope to show that these do not reinforce the *cursus* type but rather point to wider Neolithic concerns which cut across our modern boundaries and that this works at various different levels. A discussion of excavation will consider the 'third way' report presented in chapter 6 and other objectivist approaches to digging and writing the report. The final chapter, 11, is a reflection on the five themes



outlined in this chapter, 1, and a final statement on the limited by vital role phenomenology can play in archaeology.

### 1.5. A work in progress

A PhD is a project, evolving through time and with changing meanings, goals and possibilities, and repeated embellishments (just like a *cursus* monument). This project is never really concluded, only ever a work in progress, and so should be approached in this light. My research was initially a simple study of cursus monuments, an extension of my undergraduate research, but as it has developed I have begun to think about how we ‘do’ archaeology, and about things we take for granted from the discovery to the excavation and interpretation of sites.

I hope to show through my research that a balanced approach, neither fixated with collecting, measuring and classifying sites, nor abstracted from the very sites I set out to study, can help us to begin to think about the nature of studying monuments. This is an attempt to break down the dichotomies (nature - culture; cursus - bank barrow) and the divisions (ritual - domestic - funerary; Ai cursus - Aii cursus - Bi cursus -Bii cursus) which control the way we think, write and communicate as archaeologists. I hope to do this through superficially recreating all of these things in a post-processualist study of a monument type. Only by carrying this through and by searching for the preconceptions and ‘taken for granted’ underlying this, by genuinely attempting to collect together a group of morphologically similar sites, and slowly progressing to see the illogical position arrived at, can this project be played out and even then it never truly ends.



### 2. Site Typology

*“Typology draws its support from what is repetitive and stable and steers clear of what is individual and fugitive”* (Klejn 1982, 79).

#### 2.1. Introduction

The phenomenological framework for my experiences at these sites (as set out in more detail in chapter 5), demands that we reflect on our preconceptions which we bring to any archaeological site we happen to be visiting, digging or working on. These preconceptions are discussed at some length in these opening chapters. These include other sites we have knowledge of (chapters 3 and 4), other approaches and work at cursus sites (chapters 2 and 4), and perhaps most importantly, the concepts we attach to a site by what we label it. The very fact that the site is included in the list of possible cursus monuments is a judgement which must be questioned and reflected upon. The label (pigeon-hole) cursus has baggage attached, regarding the form, construction, date, function, meaning and place in the world. This cannot be taken for granted, but rather we must question the status of our divisions of the past in the present.

Therefore this chapter, and the two which follow it, are the context of my thesis, the preconceptions and background to my research (*pre-phenomenology*). Whilst chapters three and four deal specifically with cursus monuments, this chapter sets out to contextualise the concept of a cursus monument itself. The typological tradition from which it has developed is worth exploring, as it so underpins my research that it effects the sites which are chosen, the experiences of them, the interpretations made, and even how I communicate this to you, the reader. It is of fundamental importance when entering into any body of research, or a dialogue with the reader, to establish common ground and to know what one means by a certain terminology (and what one does not mean).

It is not merely enough to present a definitive definition of a cursus monument (or the architecturally similar bank barrow class). If this were the case, then this would be a paragraph or two, not a chapter. Rather, the intellectual framework

from which these terms have grown, and become synonymous with certain ideas about how they were used, must be explored. The validity of these typologies must at least be questioned rather than allowed to remain as given. If this was the case then I believe that this research would have no validity, built on foundations of sand. What has led archaeologists to believe that typology is so significant that there can be no archaeology without it (Malmer 1962)? Why does this matter so much to my research?

Over the last five years ‘cursus’ has become a terminology which has looked increasingly insufficient to capture what is an eclectic group of archaeological sites. The morphological definition has been stretched, and stretched again, particularly in Scotland. The nature of the record (all but two of the sites are now known only as cropmarks) has meant that the study of these sites (most of which have not been excavated) has concentrated on the overall plans (shape) and exterior boundaries of these enclosures. These characteristics have been the basis for inclusion or exclusion from the group. In this chapter, then, I will explore the definitions of cursus monuments and bank barrows, and through short case-studies of two developing monument typologies (cursus and henge monuments) attempt to show both the lack of imagination, and usefulness, in these schemata. (see fig.2.1).

This chapter will also explore some of the arguments surrounding typology and classification in archaeology, and in particular, will draw on my experiences and those of French writer Georges Perec in classifying the things around us. This is not just about what we classify, or even how we classify, but why we do it.

As archaeology has increasingly become self-reflective, there have been few attempts to critique the idea of typology. Most typological systems are rigid re-workings of older typological systems, refined and tweaked through more data collection and closer analysis of that data. (The logical conclusion of our dividing and sub-dividing and defining is that every site will belong in a class of one). Through collecting together a typological *corpus* of monuments as I am doing



MINOR CURSUSES :

EASTERN SITES

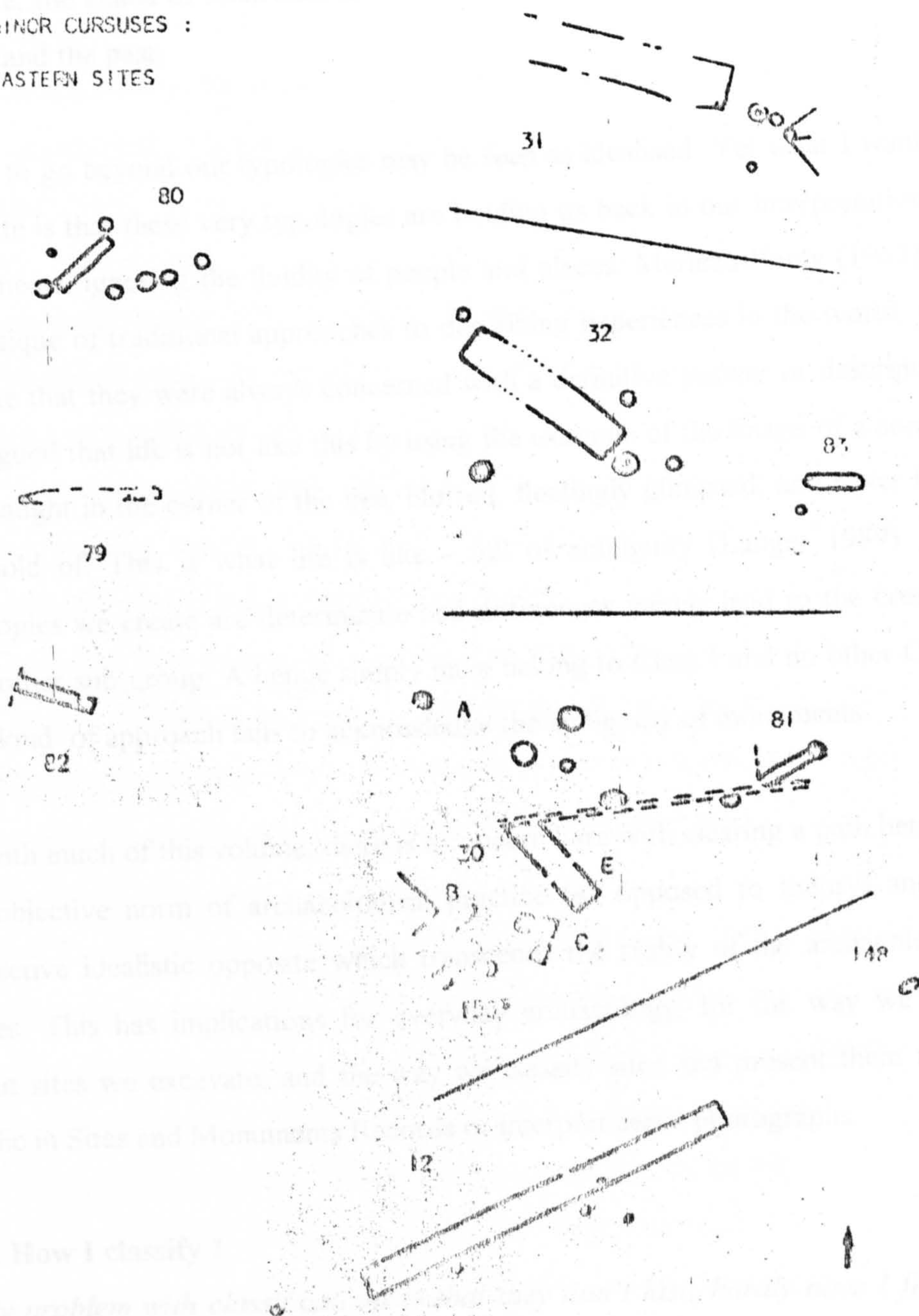


Figure 2.1 Another typological grouping of monument, in this case, Lovedays's depiction of the minor cursus monuments of eastern England at 1:10560 scale. The numbers refer to his gazetteer (Loveday 1985, 445).



here, I hope to begin to break down these in-flexible groupings we impose on the past in the present. However I do not want merely to replace it with the logical opposite, the chaos of relativism and individualism, where we can never begin to understand the past.

To try to go beyond our typologies may be seen as idealised. Yet what I want to illustrate is that these very typologies are holding us back in our interpretation of monuments, ignoring the fluidity of people and places. Merleau-Ponty (1962), in his critique of traditional approaches to describing experiences in the world, was to state that they were always concerned with a definitive answer or description. He argued that life is not like this by using the example of the image of a soaring bird caught in the corner of the eye, blurred, fleetingly glimpsed, and never truly got hold of. This is what life is like - full of ambiguity (Langer 1989). The typologies we create are determinate and differences merely lead to the creation of another sub-group. A henge simply must belong to Class I and no other Class. This kind of approach fails to acknowledge the ambiguity of monuments.

As with much of this volume, there is a concern here with clearing a path between the objective norm of archaeological practice (as opposed to theory) and the subjective idealistic opposite which transcends the reality of the archaeological traces. This has implications for everyday archaeology, for the way we think about sites we excavate, and the way we classify sites and present them to the public in Sites and Monuments Records or interpret aerial photographs.

### **2.2. How I classify 1**

*“My problem with classifications is that they don’t last; hardly have I finished putting things into order before that order is obsolete. Like everyone else, I presume, I am sometimes seized by a mania for arranging things. The sheer number of the things needing to be arranged and the near impossibilities of distributing them according to any truly satisfactory criteria mean that I never finally manage it,*



*and that the arrangements I end up with are as temporary and vague, and hardly any more effective than the original anarchy.*

*The outcome of this leads to truly strange categories. A folder full of miscellaneous papers, for example, on which is written, 'To be classified'; or a drawer labeled(sic) 'Urgent 1' with nothing in it...In short, I muddle along"* (Perec 1997, 192).

Perec was a collector of lists, of experiences or things he did, a hoarder of useless information with which, nevertheless, he used to say something meaningful when presented in the published form. He listed, for instance, everything he ate in one year ("three lamb cutlets, two curried lambs, twelve gigots...(ibid. 241)). He collected together literary descriptions of the same twelve locations in Paris either from personally being there or from memory and with these he filed away photographs of these places. He did this year after year, never returning to the same place in a month he had previously described it, working towards 288 texts. This illustrates his approach to life, to recording how places change through time, but also how *he* changes, and the relationship between the two.

The urge to classify, to set things into groups and find that everything conforms in some way to an imposed order is all around us. The concerns of post-modernism to break down boundaries and stress ambiguity over difference have served to highlight our classifications. In archaeology, it shapes the way we communicate, allowing us to share ideas of morphology, date and functions with the use of a simple phrase or word. We have constructed a jargon-filled archaeological language, abstracted from the past, and alienating to those who are not archaeologists. What does it really mean?

*"Think / classify*

*What does the fraction line signify?*



*What am I being asked precisely? Whether I think before I classify? Whether I classify before I think? How I classify what I think? How I think when I seek to classify?" (ibid. 185).*

### 2.3. Definitions 1

It is of value now to pause and look at the terminology itself more closely. Adams (1988) discusses the subtle yet important differences between concepts which, to archaeologists, may seem interchangeable. In particular, the difference between classification and typology is worth stressing. *Classification* is the setting up of categories (*classes*) through which we can communicate ideas of the similarities and differences. *Typology*, however, is the deliberate placement of things into different *types*, each of which should be of no relative importance or similarity to any other. Nor must one type depend on another for its existence. The range (or system) of things to be typed should be clearly defined and no object can belong to any more than one type. The arrangement of type groups hierarchically or chronologically are the concepts of *taxonomy* and *seriation*.

Therefore, the act of classification is the establishing of categories and the act of typology is discriminating, that of placing objects into these categories. In archaeological contexts this division can be taken further. The classifications we use are basic tools to allow excavation material to be organised and ordered, or to categorise a list of sites from a *corpus*. However, our typologies are used for dating purposes (through contextual associations on excavations or evolutionary changes in site morphology) or the structuring of Sites and Monuments Records (Adams 1988).

The development of typology in archaeology runs parallel to the history of archaeology and the subtle difference between typology and classification has become blurred so much that they are interchangeable and the same (fig 2.2). From the dawn of 'scientific' and ordered archaeology with the invention of the Three-age system (an inflexible sub-division and labelling of artefacts, people and time) through the typing of people by skull shapes, the archaeological



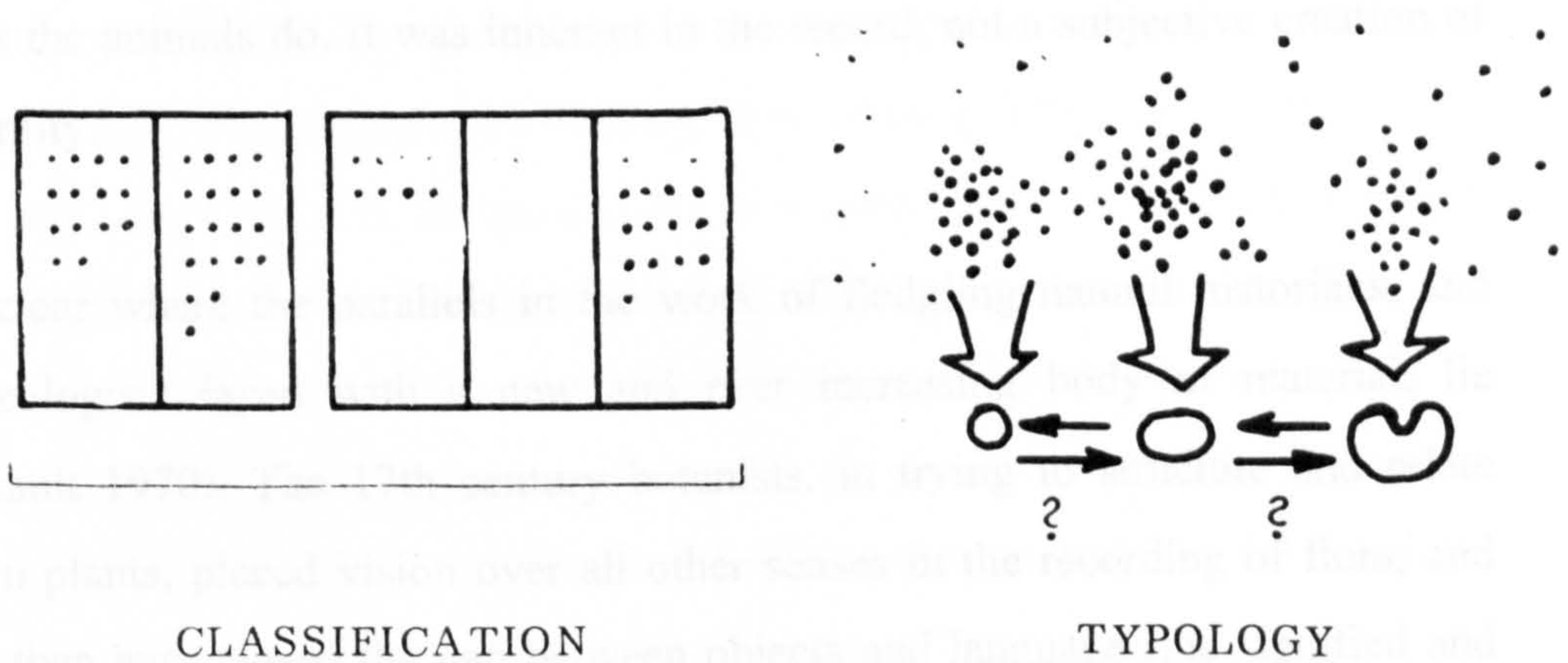


Figure 2.2 Classification and typology (from Klejn 1982, fig. 1).



remains in the present themselves have been recorded more than the past itself. From ideas of migrations and invasions based on the evidence of type sites and artefacts (in an evolutionary sliding scale), to the labels used in the everyday communication of archaeologists everywhere, there has been only occasional reflection on what we are doing (are types real? (Hill & Evans 1972)) and an increasing refinement of the typologies themselves.

Klejn (1982) recounts artefact typologies of the 1920's and 30's. Hierarchical sequences were presented in Biblical terms (A begat B which begat C and so on), or were modeled on that great creation of biologists, the Animal Kingdom. Each pottery vessel could be fitted into a Kingdom, phylum, class, order and species, with branches and evolution. The material was assumed to sit in a natural order just as the animals do. It was inherent in the record, not a subjective creation of modernity.

It is clear where the parallels in the work of fledgling natural historians, and archaeologists faced with a new and ever increasing body of material, lie (Foucault 1970). The 17th century botanists, in trying to structure and relate known plants, placed vision over all other senses in the recording of flora, and more than ever closed the gap between objects and language (the signified and signifier). It was thought that by standardising the aspects of a plant which should be recorded (to only four characteristics of each element of a plant), anybody could look at the plant and arrive at the same description, in the same terms. "In this fundamental articulation of the visible, the first confrontation of language and things can now be established in a manner that excludes all uncertainty" (*ibid.* 134).

The descriptions were to be aided by plant parts being described in terms of analogies with the human body, a trait also borrowed by archaeologist (pots have necks, bodies, mouths and so on). This personification was part of a process of standardisation, then of looking for links and comparisons. Essentially the object of study was replaced with the humanly generated and abstract image, whether



textual or an idealised pictorial representation (see figures 1.1 and 2.1). It was through this kind of thinking that a pottery bowl with a finished surface (genus) could be described also as a ceramic (phylum) vessel (class) with a basic clay-admixture ratio (order) (Klejn 1982, 47).

Essentially, this could still be *classification*. Early botanists, and antiquarian collectors, used these as shorthands for describing things or for ordering their collections and writings. At some point, however, a typological turn would be made and Klejn (1982) asserts that it is here that archaeologists erred. They wanted to use their classifications to do more, and so began to use their classifications as types, without reflecting on what they were doing. Artefact and monument classifications which were essentially applied by people and were abstract and universal were thoughtlessly transformed into types which were seen as natural and reflecting reality. Through familiarity and the core position these types have developed in archaeological discourse and have been increasingly taken for granted. Classes and types were used freely in place of one another. The difference is forgotten, and no longer matters (Adams & Adams 1991). If classifications in archaeology were just that, they would be helpful. However, they have become a linguistic device which encourages laziness (or a lack of rigour).

### 2.4. How I classify 2

From an early age we try to make order from chaos, to re-arrange our material culture and the world around us into schemata, classes, groups, species and pigeon-holes. When I was young, I could never actually eat a packet of sweets immediately after opening them. Smarties would be tumbled out in a random splash of shiny colours and from this spread I would start to arrange small piles - red smarties, orange ones, yellow ones, pink ones, brown (subdivided into dark and light) and so on. Each colour had its own small significances - I heard rumours that the red ones used to give people cancer. The blue smarties were a newer invention and often restricted to one a tube. Orange ones were chocolate orange flavoured and so the only kind to stray from the standard chocolate



flavour of the pack. At church the minister told us that people were like smarties, different colours on the outside but beneath the surface all the same (apart from orange I suppose).

My predilection for sweets rarely ran as far as Revels. The mixed centres were concealed by a uniform chocolate coating defying a superficial colour classification. Morphologically only the smaller peanut ones, and the occasional tantalising glimpse of raisin through the coating, allowed differentiation. To tell them apart I had to eat them and then they were gone anyway.

In adulthood, we classify objects, time, space, architecture, and people. We build categories around ourselves, or have then built around us, and these begin to gather value judgements within classes classifications, and moral implications about things which fall outwith these classes (or even worse, defy classifications). This can range from the mundane (which football team you support), to the deadly serious (the recent war in Kosovo was all about the worth placed on different *types* of people, and where, or where not, they belonged).

We begin to place value judgements on these typologies (because they are that, not mere classifications). This is difficult to escape - even supposedly neutral sequences cannot avoid this, if only at the metaphorical level. Perec (1997) discusses the value of the letters of the alphabet, perceived as twenty-six equal characters (except in Scrabble), yet this is not always the case. Exams are graded A to F, where A is best, F the worst. 'B movies' were an inferior product, second the main billing (starring those now referred to as A-list stars). Orange smarties were always the best.

Things which do not fit nicely into typologies become problematic. Adams (1988) notes that most typological schemes need a 'none of the above' category, (miscellaneous). Anything which did not fit the neat opposition poles of structuralism were regarded as taboo. Unconsciously (or consciously) some



members of society are alienated because they fall outwith the norms or standards of gender, sexuality, ethnic origin or religion.

2.4. Typology 2

In archaeology, this dependence on typology is no better illustrated than our reactions when we excavate a site which does not fit neatly, or even with a degree of forcing, into a preconceived category of site which we are already familiar with (section 6.16). By the same token, a cropmark which cannot be labelled causes great confusion and anguish and inevitably these get lost in generalised classes (cropmarks, maculae, enclosure, linear cropmark, even cursus). Just like whenever we eat a new food, we always have to try to describe it in terms of known flavours (tastes like chicken).

## 2.4. Typology 2

### 2.5. Why do we classify?

Why do we classify and type at all? There are several possible answers and, as usual, it is probably a combination of all of these rather than one in particular. Part of it is our urge to put our order onto a dis-ordered group of things.

There is also the practicalities of communication - classes allow a literary shorthand way of describing a site or artefact style, a simple signifier. The class 'henge' puts in ones mind a certain shape of enclosure, as well as ideas about the age of these, that it is some kind of ritual site, and relationships with other types like standing stones or grooved ware. Typology tries to fit all possible sites into the pre-set classes established over the course of this century (see section 2.8).

2.5. Typology 2

These typologies are also looking for patterns and shared characteristics which can link these sites perhaps over large geographical areas. Differences are highlighted to put distance between these types and similarities are almost always used to reinforce standing classifications rather than to erode them. This process is undertaken for cultures, communities, cosmologies, the movements of people, pottery, flint tools, food eaten and site locations. Inevitably, these concepts are placed into taxonomic sequences, or seriated, and value judgements and assumptions are made.



Typologies, therefore, are either implicitly or explicitly there for a purpose other than a mere list or catalogue. They may be used to provide a relative dating sequence for an artefact collection. There is the suspicion that perhaps some typologies are used to justify interpretations of sites. There is a need for logic, for rising above chaos and trying to use our expertise (as archaeologists) to help out the wider public. Every discipline has its jargon and so is exclusive. “All utopias are depressing because they leave no room for chance, for difference, for the ‘miscellaneous’. Everything has been set in order, and order reigns” (Perec 1997, 187). Where would we be without our typologies?

### 2.6. Definitions 2

*Cursus monument.* ‘Elongated parallel sided sites normally totally enclosed by their defining ditch or pits, but on very rare occasions having one open end .... they may possess either internal banks or more rarely an axial mound’. (Loveday 1985, 33).

*Bank barrow.* Loveday defines bank barrows as having ‘ length greater than normal, sides parallel, mound of uniform height...’ (1985, 236).

*Henge monument.* ‘The most common feature of the henge monuments is the presence of a surrounding earthwork, in the form of a ditch within a bank, which is circular, or nearly so, in plan, and is broken either by a single entrance or by two opposite entrances. This earthwork may enclose a setting of stones, posts or pits, or in some cases, one of more burials’. (Atkinson *et al* 1951, 82).

*Bank barrow.* Bank barrows are defined by what they are *not*. They are too long to be long barrows, and too narrow to be cursus monuments. They are called barrows yet not all have produced any evidence for being used for burials.



*Cursus monument.* ‘All share the common feature of being very long, rectilinear enclosures, usually defined either by a ditch enclosing the site with a bank running along the inner edge of the ditch, or, in many cases in Scotland, by pits (which may or may not have held wooden posts). The length and width vary considerably.’ (Brophy 1998a, 92).

### 2.7. How we classify monuments

When I started working with the oblique aerial photographic collection in the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) it soon became clear that the way that we classify cropmark (and other) sites is inadequate. We deal in obscure and general terms, with little or no meaning to the public, like *maculae* or *cursus*, or terms so bland as to verge on the useless (enclosure, cropmarks, or earthwork). Even familiar terms like fort and settlement carry too many implications and preconceptions to really acknowledge the complexity of a site. The divisions between such monument types is often arbitrary or inexplicable. (When does a ring-ditch become a circular enclosure, and what differentiates some forts and settlements?). Apparently the difference between a settlement and a homestead at the time of the publication of the Roxburghshire Inventory (RCAHMS 1956) in the 1950’s was the number of tuppenny coins which could fit in the interior of the site plan at 1:1250 scale. The RCAHMS are, however, reviewing the terms they use, and trying to make these more transparent to the public in future years, with clear definitions and explanations of the limitations our interpretations have.

The classificatory categories of prehistoric monuments falls into two rough categories. Firstly, a general class - henge, causewayed enclosure, hill-fort, *cursus*, long mortuary enclosure, long barrow, round barrow, hut-circle, broch, dun. Many of these labels are applied on morphological grounds because of certain defining architectural features, or have origins in an original interpretation (*cursus* comes from the idea of the Roman *circus*, an early description of *cursus* sites in Wessex). Others are unfortunate functional terms, like long mortuary enclosure, based on the shape and size of the enclosure rather than any evidence



for such a function. Still others have localised names reflecting their distribution (broch, dun, wag) which are now becoming obsolete, replaced with more clinical modern 'neutral' terms (broch become North Atlantic Complex Round-House, wag an aisled-house). It says much about the associated ideas of site types that Broch is abandoned altogether as politically incorrect because it embodies an out-dated idea of these towers as purely defensive structures (Armit 1990). Much discussion has raged as to which sites can and cannot be included in each list. As Adams (1988) has noted, the creation of the rules of a game (classification) is followed by very different interpretations of things as the game is played (typology).

These categories are often carefully defined, usually arbitrarily. Someone may argue defensively that this site isn't a broch, or another is 35m too short to be a cursus, and therefore must be a long mortuary enclosure. Yet where has this got us? What is a henge? What isn't a henge? Is every site that is called a henge actually a henge? *It is possible to excavated a site, conclude that it is a henge, and leave it at that.* This is what I meant earlier when I noted the idea of lack of rigour being encouraged by typological systems.

Tilley (1999), on this same subject, has recently written about the general monumental type 'megalith', and, more specifically, its use in archaeological literature. Megalith, like cursus, has a classical origin and both are virtually meaningless outwith archaeology. More seriously is the charge, which I am also trying to make here, that such terms constrain us intellectually and textually, limit imagination, and trap us in a finite series of theories with differing sociological gloss dependent on the wider intellectual context of the day. Studies of monuments have often laboured, then, to work either towards one of these repeating theories (Tilley suggests 'Grand Narratives based on architectural similarities' or 'the obsession with origins') or to re-work and refine the typology itself.



I will come to cursus monuments later (themselves characterised by the ‘Grand Narrative’ of processions repeated by archaeologists from many differing intellectual backgrounds), but will firstly look at the development of henge typology which has seen an increasingly refined and defined series of sub-groups under the general type, henge. Throughout this century much time and effort has been concentrated on refining the parameters of each class, even of creating new classes and sub-groups, and little consideration seems to have gone into the meaning or worth of these types at all. The term has gathered much baggage around it regarding function, dating and so on over these years, and has even helped form seriations (chronologies) of henges.

### **2.8. Henge monuments**

The archetypal henge monument, Stonehenge, the type-site itself, is perhaps the most atypical henge of them all. The henge itself is lost to public notice amidst the clamour to see the stones. The word henge, like cursus, has a rather obscure and quaint origin, which has been stretched and abused ever since. Atkinson noted that “The term ‘henge’ should, on strictly etymological grounds, be applied only to monuments which can be shown to possess, or to have possessed formerly, a ‘hanging’ structure, that is to say, lintels”. He goes on, “Used in this strict sense, therefore, the term ‘henge monument’ is redundant” (in Atkinson *et al* 1951, 81).

In general, the term henge has been used to group together Neolithic circular earthwork enclosures of a presumably ritual nature (see definition above in section 2.6). Atkinson preferred it to the even more ambiguous term ‘sanctuary’. The general classification of henge was initially applied only in Wessex (as was cursus). A series of published lists of cursus sites has extended both the geographical scope and the physical nature of henge monuments (see Atkinson *et al*. 1951; Burl 1969; Wainright 1969; Clare 1986, 1987; Harding & Lee 1987).

An initially small group of sites were collected together as henge monuments (meeting places or temples) by Kendrick and Hawkes (1932). These were soon



linked to a tradition of circular monuments in Dorset placed within one of two categories - stone circles and earth circles (hengés), a division based on the form of the boundary (Piggott & Piggott 1939). The type of earth circles was further divided into 'at least two distinct types of monument' (*ibid.* 140), indistinguishable in all respects except for the number of entrances and possibly the alignment of any entrances. Their first class had one entrance, their second two opposed entrances. These categories, based on differing morphological criteria, were linked to invading cultures. Stone circles were built by the B1 beaker folk from Breton, and the hengés had an A beaker Dutch / Rhineland origin.

A longer and wider reaching list of henge sites was published by Atkinson at the end of the first report into the Dorchester-on-Thames excavations which included those of Big Rings henge (Atkinson *et al* 1951). A further sub-grouping of Class II hengés (known as Class IIA) was discussed, sites with a double ditch and opposed entrances. These classes were shown to differentiate along parameters such as size, shape and orientation. Atkinson admits that these divisions are unsatisfactory and do not represent the archaeological traces which are far more varied and diverse. However his disclaimer that "it is difficult , however, to find any system of terminology or classification which is likely to create less confusion than that here adopted" (*ibid.* 93) confirms Tilley's argument about those who refine such typologies that "difference is recognised..... but is simultaneously denied..." (1999, 97).

Later approaches to hengés continued to refine their classification. Wainright (1969), for instance, added the hengiform group of sites based on enclosure diameter. Hengés were between 30m and 300m across, larger sites were 'earthwork enclosures' and smaller 'hengiform'. Burl (1969) not only divided the sites into regional groups, but also introduced the Class IA henge. Catherall (1971) listed internal characteristics from A to F, so Durrington Walls becomes a Class B henge, Balfarg a Class F, and Cairnpapple a Class C/D/E hybrid. These classes were cross-referenced with the earlier Class I and II scheme and had



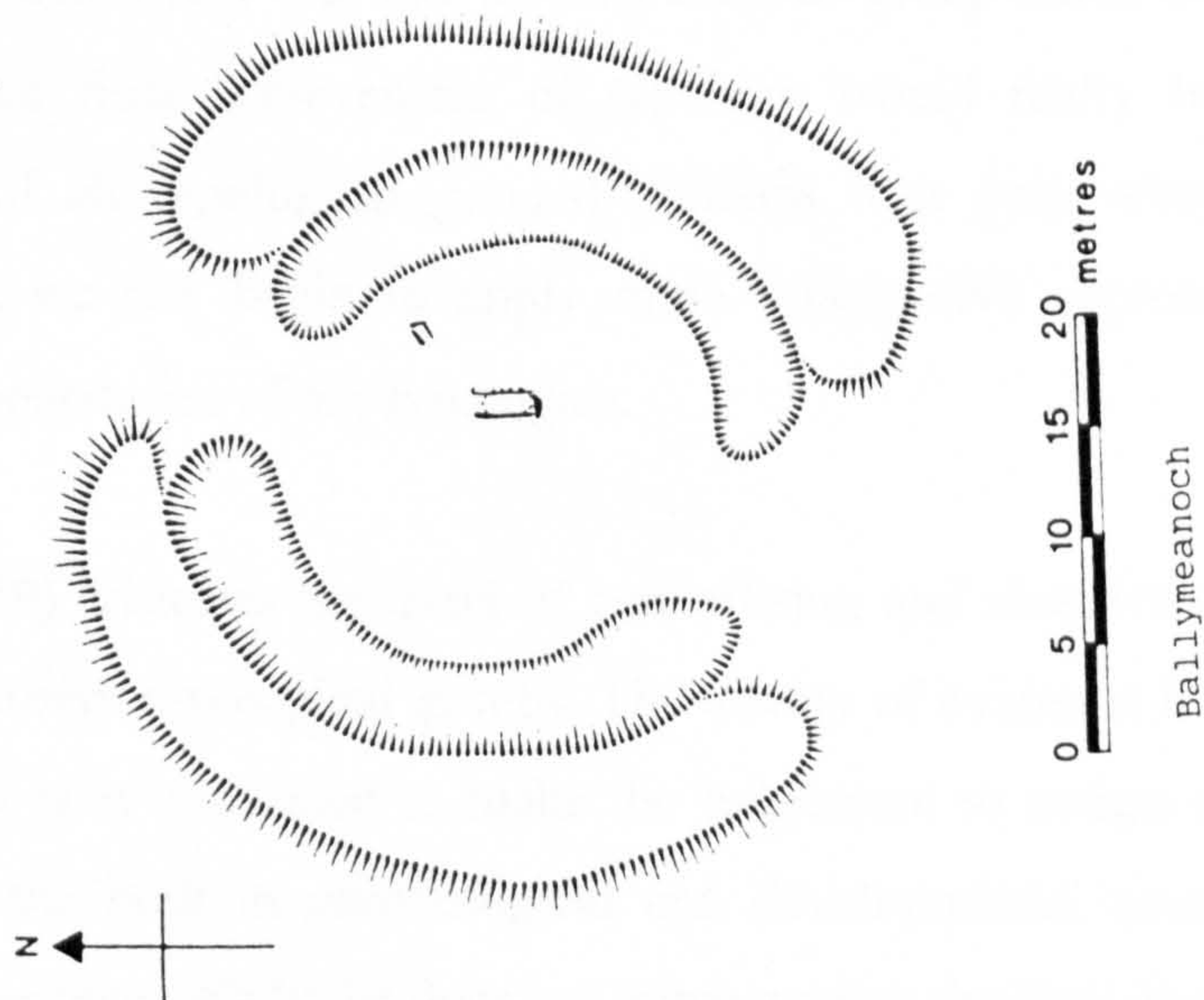
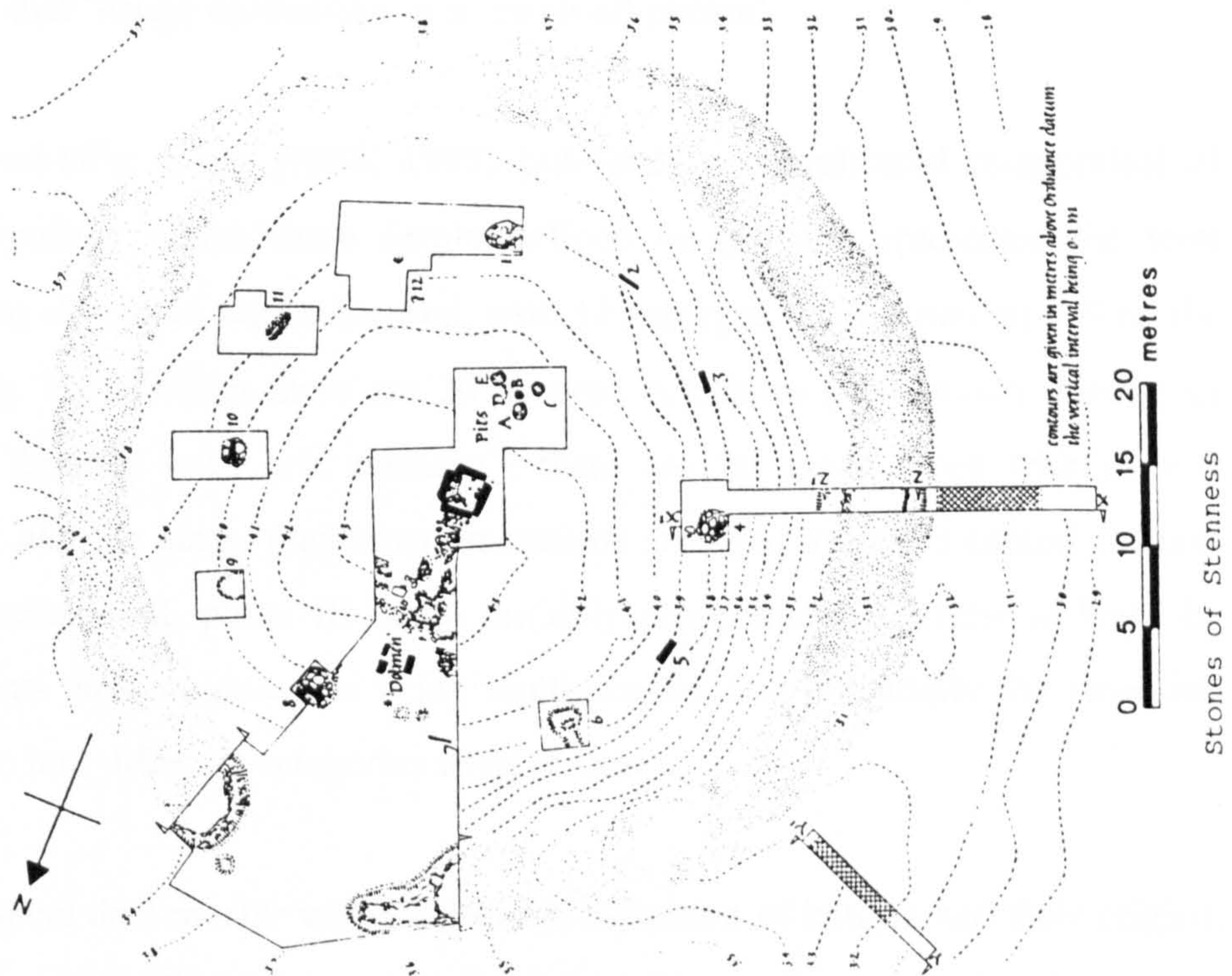


Figure 2.3 Two classic henges. Class I at the top (the Stones of Stenness, Orkney) and Class II (bottom) (Ballymeanoch, Argyll). These class labels fall far short of describing the complexity of these sites (from Harding & Lee 1987, 390).



chronological implications. Yet, in an echo of Atkinson's concerns, Catherall admitted that 'henge monument' is a 'catch-all phrase'.

In the mid-80's, Clare (1986, 1987) published a complicated re-appraisal of henge typology which more firmly defined henges and eradicated the term hengiform. A matrix was to be used, with 12 subtypes on one axis and 49 on the other (fig. 2.4). Whilst there are 20 subtype A henges ('no known internal or external features with one entrance') there are far more types with only 1 member, like the class 'numerous cremations arranged around a central feature' with Dorchester II, phase III being the only group member. (Here at least the monuments are recognised as being multi-phased, and potentially the same site can move into different categories through time).

These papers deal mostly with the precise definition of henges and their origins, and less on their function or meaning (which is usually assumed to be *ritual*). This sequence of type development seems to me to be nearing its logical conclusion where every site has its own class or group based on its individual features. (The final achievement of typology would really be the absolute breakdown of all typological groups). Perhaps it is only when this point is reached that we can begin to apply more imaginative approaches that look beyond the boundaries of our typologies.

Barclay (1989) criticises the trend of generalising and simplifying in achieving these all-inclusive typological groups. The quality of evidence is varied as well, with too few sites excavated to make the judgement to assign a type to a site never mind the built in chronological and developmental associations which come with the type. Whilst he does not argue against the idea that we have to try to order the traces of the past in some way, he stresses that this is not best served by attempting to squeeze anomalous sites into tightly defined groups. It is suggested instead that only by collecting more evidence from these sites through excavation can we have a consistent record upon which to judge and classify



	Ring ditch A								Ring ditch								Henge								Henge A								Ring bank								Ring bank A								
	An	O	I	II	III	IV	V	U	An	O	I	II	III	IV	V	U	An	O	I	II	III	IV	V	U	An	O	I	II	III	IV	V	U	An	O	I	II	III	IV	V	U	An	O	I	II	III	IV	V	U	Unenc
a																																																	
b																																																	
c																																																	
d																																																	
e																																																	
f																																																	
g																																																	
h																																																	
i																																																	
j																																																	
k																																																	
l																																																	

Matrix used for classification of sites. First level, perimeter type: henge = bank and ditch, A = concentric ditches (as Atkinson 1951, 82). Second level, entrances: An = annular (no entrance); O = ditch with gap and bank without, or vice versa; I = one, II = two, III = three entrances, in one segment only; IV = four opposed entrances; V = crescentic or semicircular temenos; U = uncertain. Third level, associated features: a = unknown; b = numerous primary cremations in pits; c = as b, but with central feature; d = pit circle or crescent; e = as d, but with central feature; f = circle of uprights; g = as f, but with central feature; h = central feature only; i = features both inside and outside; j = features outside only; k = irregular features or settlement; l = no known features

Figure 2.4 Clare's matrix for the classification of sites (from Clare 1986, fig. 1)



(*ibid.* 262; and for similar arguments see Catherall 1976, 8; Harding & Lee 1987, chapter 3).

The detailed gazetteer published by Harding and Lee (1987) includes a 'comment' field in the database where the status of the site as a henge is judged. This includes the 'classic henge' (based on Atkinson's definition)), henge enclosure, possible henges and mini-henges. They make the point (later echoed by Barclay (1989)) that previous classifications have applied the label of henge to many sites which could have any number of possible dates and functions, primarily because they are indistinct earthworks or cropmarks. This is a problem of a much larger proportion in the cursus record. It is emphasised that most 'classic' henges have been shown to be Neolithic (and by extension, henges) through excavation.

### **2.9. Cursus monuments**

The classification of cursus monuments used to be simple. They were very long, rectilinear enclosures defined by an enclosing ditch and bank, with occasional breaks in this representing, presumably, entrance points, and a terminal ditch and bank at either end. As the number of sites grew, however, trends started to be noticed. These were based around dimensions, and the shape of the terminal. Topping (1982), as mentioned in the previous chapter, took average measurements of a group of cursus sites in England and from this began to talk about 'typical' cursus monuments.

Loveday and Petchey (1982) took this further and in the early 1980's began to break down the cursus class into groups according to size. This led to Major cursus sites, with length over 500m, and Minor cursus sites, between 200 and 500m long. Shorter sites, mostly under 80m in length, he called Oblong Ditch enclosures, a suitably non-functional term. These groupings were arrived at through cluster analysis of known rectilinear enclosures. He wanted to classify monuments in a neutral (objective) way, to begin to see patterns and distributions. More interestingly, they felt that there was a danger that such



arbitrary, morphological typologies involved the "assumption that small variation in basic shape...were necessarily of significance to the builders" (*ibid.* 17). (I will discuss such 'small variations' in more depth in chapter 8).

Loveday (1985) then moved to a more complex, traditional typology of cursus sites. He divided them up into Class A and B, and sub-groups of these, depending on terminal shape. A was rounded, and Bi-iii were variations on straight and angular (fig. 2.5). Hedges and Buckley (1981) had already moved this difference from a simple classification to an informative typology by suggesting that rounded terminal were later than straight ones, the latter being easier to construct accurately. On this point, it is interesting to note that one *cursus* in Scotland, Old Montrose, Angus, has one rounded terminal and one straight one (fig. 3.6).

A more helpful typological scheme was put forward at around the same time by Pryor (in Pryor & French 1985), who suggested that cursus monuments, like Maxey which he had just excavated, were not necessarily one unitary construction as had usually assumed. Instead he grouped cursus sites into three categories -

- “1. ‘Monumental’ or continuously used sites (cursuses, as originally understood, e.g. Dorset)
2. Short-lived, single period sites (small, e.g. Barnack or large, e.g. Springfield).
3. Long-lived episodic ditched alignments sites (e.g. Maxey, Fornham-all-Saints)”

(*ibid.* 1985, 301).

Sites such as the Cleaven Dyke (a *cursus* / bank barrow in Perthshire) which appears to have been built in large segments with the site being continually added to through an unknown period of time, illustrate the idea of these enclosures being visible to us only at their final extent, not showing the many changes and intermediate stages or earlier final extents. The many elaborate typologies of henges, stone circles and so on often fail to consider the development of these

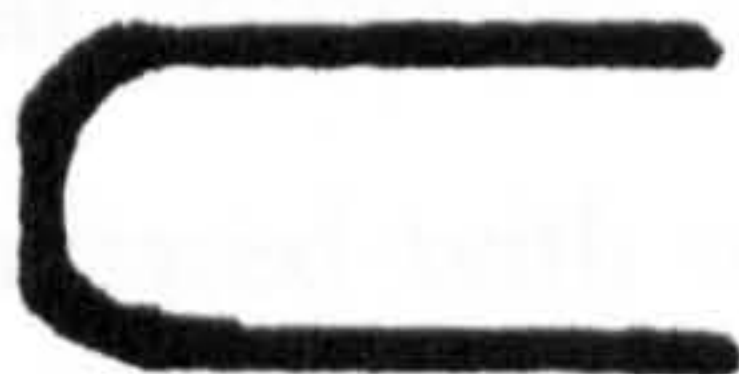


**A (CONVEX)**

**Ai**      ROUNDED



**Aii**      PARTIALLY  
             FLATTENED

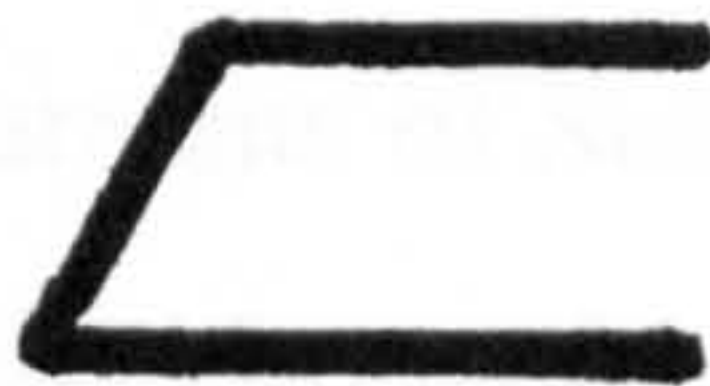


**B (SQUARED)**

**Bi**      PRECISELY  
           SQUARED



**Bii**      IRREGULARLY  
           SQUARED



**Biii**      ONE CORNER SET  
            AT OBTUSE ANGLE

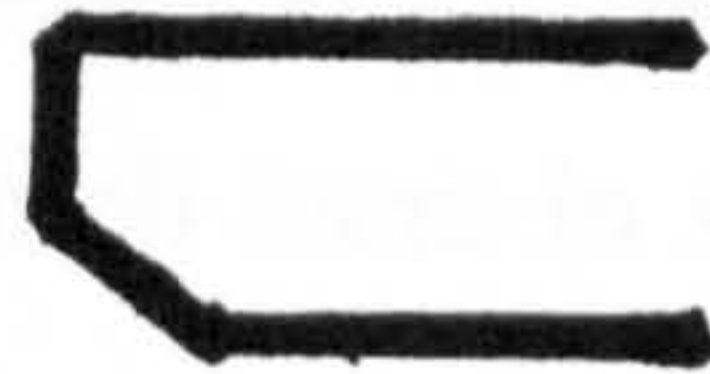


Figure 2.5 Loveday's terminal shape typology (after Loveday 1985, fig. 3.4)



sites, looking only at this final version. As Thomas has observed, monuments are not objects but ongoing processes (1998a).

The RCAHMS, for its most recent inventory *Eastern Dumfriesshire* (1997), has started to take into account locations within the landscape when classifying cursus sites in Scotland. Sites in low-lying locations on river terraces and gravels are thought more likely to be cursus sites than a rectilinear enclosures on a hill side or upland location (S. Halliday pers. comm.). Yet isn't this just another typological trait?

### 2.10. Discussion

So, are terms like 'cursus' and 'henge' really applicable any more? I would argue that their value has to be questioned. They pull together diverse, eclectic groups of monuments and try to use that diversity to order our archaeological record. The groupings are almost always based on morphological properties alone. For cursus these are of rectilinearity, and extreme length compared with width. For henges it is having an internal ditch and one or two entrances. Many sites are included as cursus monuments, I would argue, because there is little else to call them (this is definitely not the case with cropmark henges). However, such rectilinearity is not a quality only of cursus sites - Barclay (1982) excavated such a cropmark at Huntingtower, Perth in the late 1970's, and it turned out to be a medieval roadway.

The sites discussed in the next chapter are the *cursus* monuments of Scotland and their clumping together indicates to me all that is unhelpful about classificatory schemes. As chapter 4 will suggest, after all our work on such sites they are still regarded in general as a group of rectilinear enclosures which were in some way processional. Anything which we decide to call a *cursus* has this associated image added to it. Is it really reasonable to tar all these enclosures with the same brush, or isn't this merely a generalisation which is unhelpful precisely because it contains the ready made answers which we like - Neolithic, ritual, processional? The term cursus has merely clouded the meaning of a very interesting set of

individual sites and the sub-divisions have done little other than pass the time of day and have had little influence on the wider debate.

As archaeologists, in one way or another, we classify many areas of past lives, from the people themselves to the places they inhabited and invested with meaning, the architecture they created and the things they made. We apply the standards we see around us today, the divisions we have around us in society and architecture, and begin to shape our interpretations of the past from there - and why not? This is our context just as Piggott and Piggott (1939) worked in a certain context when they divided up earthwork enclosures in Dorset into types I and II, and just as William Stukeley worked when he said Stonehenge cursus was a chariot racing arena (1740).

As well as looking at monument typology, then, I want to consider how we divide everyday life into nature and culture with the natural world of hills, rivers, plants and trees seen as set apart from humankind. A rock outcrop, as Tilley suggested in his work on Bodmin Moor, could be invested with as much significance as a nearby stone circle and indeed the origins of these special places could be ambiguous, linked in some way with the ancestors (1996). Perhaps no conceptual division of natural and cultural was even considered?

We divide areas of activity and life into convenient units - domestic, ritual, mortuary and so on.

All of these categories stem from our need to order things, and after considering the sites and my experiences at them, I hope that I can begin to think anew about these divisions, considering instead the ambiguous nature of life (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Monuments are ambiguous but, more importantly, they were ambiguous when being conceptualised, built and used. Our fixed typologies, whilst practical for communication and cataloguing, have trapped us to both ignore the differences between similar monuments, and the similarities between different



## Introduction

monuments. My goal in defining the cursus monuments of Scotland is to break down this definition and look to the sites not the label.

### 3. The *cursus* monuments of Scotland

#### 3.1. Introduction

We have a monument class, and now we must begin to look at the sites within this class in Scotland. From this starting point, we can see that we have already begun to interpret the sites by including them within this discussion. The descriptions of these enclosures and cropmarks which follow are, of course, also interpretative. Although aerial photography has a veneer of objectivity, the interpretation of cropmarks is extremely subjective, belying the assumption that the camera does not lie and that the image is all (Raczkowski 1999). The inclusion or exclusion of sites has mostly been left to others - as I stated earlier they have all been called *cursus* by someone at some time. I hope that we can begin to develop a different way of looking at monuments through this group of sites.

Rectilinear enclosures in Scotland tend to be called *cursus* monuments, so long as they are not too wide, too short, or too obviously Roman. The form of definition has begun to no longer matter. The inclusion of sites defined not by the already discussed norm (external ditch, internal bank), but rather by pits or standing timbers, has had the effect of opening up the classification 'cursus' to contain sites of such a wide and varying nature that ironically the nomenclature I am working with is fast becoming redundant, out-stripped by the range and scope of sites which we define as *cursus* (possible). This has helped me to begin to think about differences as well as similarities within established typological bounds.

In this chapter, I will look at the wide and varied nature of Scotland's rectilinear enclosures, including the surprisingly large number of these sites now excavated. As well as discussing the cropmark evidence (often my interpretations) for the sites, and including many recently recorded and unpublished cropmarks, I will also summarise the results of any excavations and describe the topographical situation of the *cursus*. Site names in **bold text** are used when discussing that specific site, and this is the name given in the NMRS and in the gazetteer. Most



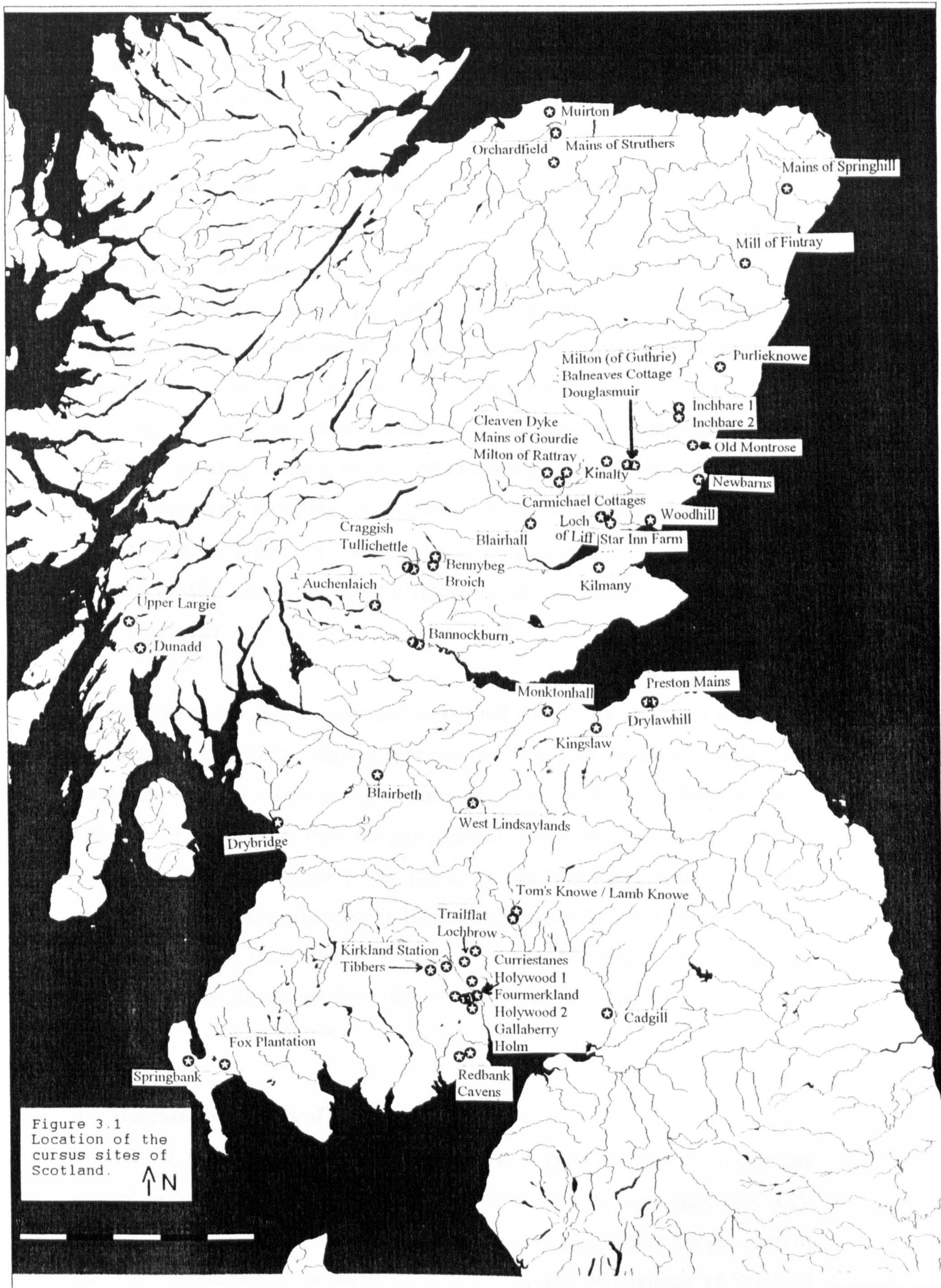


Figure 3.1  
Location of the  
cursus sites of  
Scotland.





aerial photographs of the sites are also contained in the gazetteer. Other accounts of these sites, mostly regional, include Barclay in Kendrick 1995 and Brophy 1995, 1998a and 1999b.

The ordering of the sites needs brief explanation. Although I have previously divided up the sites in descriptive discussions by boundary type (ditch, pit) and width (bank barrows), with the justification that this was done for purely practical editorial reasons (Brophy 1999b), here there are no such constraints and other ideas could be explored. Ordering the sites by morphological similarity is not what I want to do, as later discussion will make clear. By the same token, it is also clear that a random ordering, aimlessly describing a site from Aberdeenshire then moving onto a Lothian *cursus* before leaping to Argyll, would make little sense to anybody, including me. Alphabetical ordering would founder for the same reasons and there is no clear logic to discussing sites ordered by the arbitrary NMRS numbering system (preferred in the gazetteer incidentally for quick reference).

Instead I have grouped my discussion (but not necessarily the sites) in general 'regional' groupings and this is appropriate I think for Scotland where ideas about regional variations are often proposed (see for instance Barclay 1997; Sharples 1992). Whether there are any regional *cursus* traditions in Scotland will be discussed later in chapter 10 but this chapter at least suggests that unless we are missing something elsewhere in Britain and Ireland there is a unique regional feel to Scotland's sites. This is a modern political boundary, but nevertheless there are many things north of the border which do tend to be stubbornly *different....*

### **3.2. Heightened powers of perception**

Until 1970, there was no published evidence to suggest that *cursus* monuments existed in Scotland, and yet there are now over fifty possible sites (fig. 3.1). Almost all the credit for this must go to the Aerial Photographic Survey team of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland



(RCAHMS), and for dedicated individuals like Gordon Maxwell, Gordon Barclay, and Marilyn Brown. What is the story of the leaps taken in *cursus* recognition in the last thirty years? How has this been made possible by aerial photography?

After all, this is really the story of aerial photography in Scotland. The re-interpretation of the two surviving earthwork sites came only after the discoveries of cropmark *cursus* monuments. (The Cleaven Dyke, a massive *cursus* earthwork in Perthshire and surely one of the most awe-inspiring Neolithic monuments still surviving in Britain today, was thought to be Roman until the early 1980's (Maxwell 1983a). Likewise, one terminal of an extensive 'cursiform' bank barrow at Eskdalemuir was thought to be a burial mound until 1992 (RCAHMS 1992)). The first site in Scotland *recognised* to be a *cursus* was identified firstly from air photographs taken by St. Joseph, and then by a resistivity survey in 1970 (Williams and Anderson 1971), underlying a Roman Temporary Camp at Gallaberry, just north of Dumfries. St. Joseph's incursions north of the border with CUCAP brought the discovery of several of the 'pit-defined' rectilinear enclosures discussed here - Bennybeg (Perthshire), Douglassmuir (Angus) and Inchbare 1 (Angus). None of these were interpreted as being *cursus*-related and his published account of a 'palisaded enclosure' at Inchbare was accompanied by a tenuous suggestion of Dark Age origins (1976).

At this time, however, a period of concentrated aerial reconnaissance was commencing on a scale never before seen in Scotland. This important group of pitted sites - in 1976 alone, three sites similar to Inchbare were discovered - were some of the most exciting early discoveries, as related by Maxwell (1979). He noted the explosion in the number of known pit-defined enclosures of all shapes, including these rectilinear sites typified by Balneaves Cottage, Angus. This lay between the village of Friockheim and St. Joseph's Douglassmuir site (Kendrick 1995). Morphologically, the large rectangular enclosures resembled *cursus* monuments and 'avenues' and were tentatively described as thus by Maxwell. Traditional *cursus* monuments were almost unknown in Scotland even then so



## Introduction

this interpretation (inevitably inheriting the judgements which these label cursus brings - ritual, processional, Neolithic) was all the more remarkable and imaginative.

Suddenly, some anomalous CUCAP discoveries could be assigned a pigeon-hole. St. Joseph's discovery at Inchbare was soon followed by an RCAHMS sites, almost identical, in the field immediately to the north. Bennybeg is now widely regarded as a pit-defined cursus (Darvill 1996), and Douglasmuir was shown through excavation to be Neolithic (Kendrick 1995).

The cropmark record of Scotland, by the early 1980's, was an invaluable new addition to Scottish archaeology. Aerial photography dramatically increased the rate of discovery of both new site types, and new examples of known site categories (Maxwell 1983b). This 'rush' of discoveries was reflected by Loveday (1985) in his exhaustive thesis on the cursus monuments of Britain. He noted in his corpus nine Scottish sites known at that time - six in Angus (Inchbare 1 and 2, Balneaves Cottage, Maryton (Old Montrose), Kinalty and Douglasmuir), and three around the village of Holywood, Dumfries and Galloway (Holywood A and B, and Fourmerkland). All but three were pit-defined, and Loveday included all within his 'minor' cursus category (Loveday & Petchey 1982, 18).

A list collated by Gordon Barclay in the mid-1990's (and later published as a distribution map (Barclay 1997)) included fifteen sites (fig. 3.2), and undergraduate research produced a gazetteer of twenty-one *cursus* enclosures (Brophy 1995).

Of the fifty-six sites shown in fig. 3.1, all but two are known only as cropmarks. This dependence on aerial photography causes two distinct problems. Firstly, the nature of both aerial reconnaissance and natural conditions in Scotland conspire to bias the record towards the eastern lowlands. Hanson and MacInnes (1991) note the higher proportion of flying that has occurred in the Lothians, Fife, Angus, Aberdeenshire and Moray. Fig. 3.3 shows the flight paths of RCAHMS



# Cursus Monuments

mmB.

Name	NGR	Region/District	NMRS No.	Ref.	maps
✓ Purlie Knowe	NJ 835 163	Aberdeenshire	NJ 81 NW	?	
✓ Bennybeg P	NN 865 190	Perthshire	NN 81 NE	44	
✓ Broich WD	NN 866 202	Perthshire	NN 82 SE	69	
✓ Blairhall WD	NO 116 280	Perthshire	NO 12 NW	43	
✓ Cleaven Dyke D	NO 174 378	Perth & Kinross	NO 13 NE	89 (110 14 SE 80)	
✓ Milton of Rattray P	NO 197 448	Perth & Kinross	NO 14 SE	82	
✗ Melville Muir	NO 305 123	Fife	NO 31 SW	73, 74	
✓ Kinalty PP	NO 356 511	Tayside - Angus	NO 35 SE	22	✓
✓ Milton 1 D	NO 587 500	Tayside - Angus	NO 55 SE	18	✓
✓ Milton 2 P	NO 592 500	" "	NO 55 SE	18	✓
✓ Douglasmuir P	NO 609 493	Angus	NO 64 NW	35	✓
✓ Woodhill P	NO 516 346		NO 53 SW	45	✓
✓ Balneaves Cottage WP	NO 605 494	Angus	NO 64 NW	27	✓
✓ Old Montrose P	NO 661 571	Angus	NO 65 NE	36	✓
✓ Inchbare 1 F	NO 607 654	Grampian	NO 66 NW	41	✓
✓ Inchbare 2 P	NO 607 657		NO 66 NW	50	✓
✓ Bannockburn 1 P	NS 817 901	Strathclyde	NS 89 SW	22	
✓ Bannockburn 2	NS 816 901	Strathclyde	NS 89 SW	24	
✓ Drylawhill D	NT 590 779	East Lothian	NT 57 NE 67/8	67 (68)	
✓ Cavens WD	NX 972 584	Dumfriesshire	NX 95 NE	20	✓
✓ Hollywood 1 WD	NX 949 796	Dumfriesshire	NX 97 NE	23	✓
✓ Curriestanes WD	NX 960 751		NX 97 NE	25	✓
✓ Hollywood 2 WD	NX 950 801	Dumfriesshire	NX 98 SE	42	✓

Holm. WP

-Dunfermline.

↓

Sorry. these  
sections are not  
included yet.

Figure 3.2 The initial list of cursus monuments in Scotland compiled by Gordon Barclay in the early 1990's with my notes.



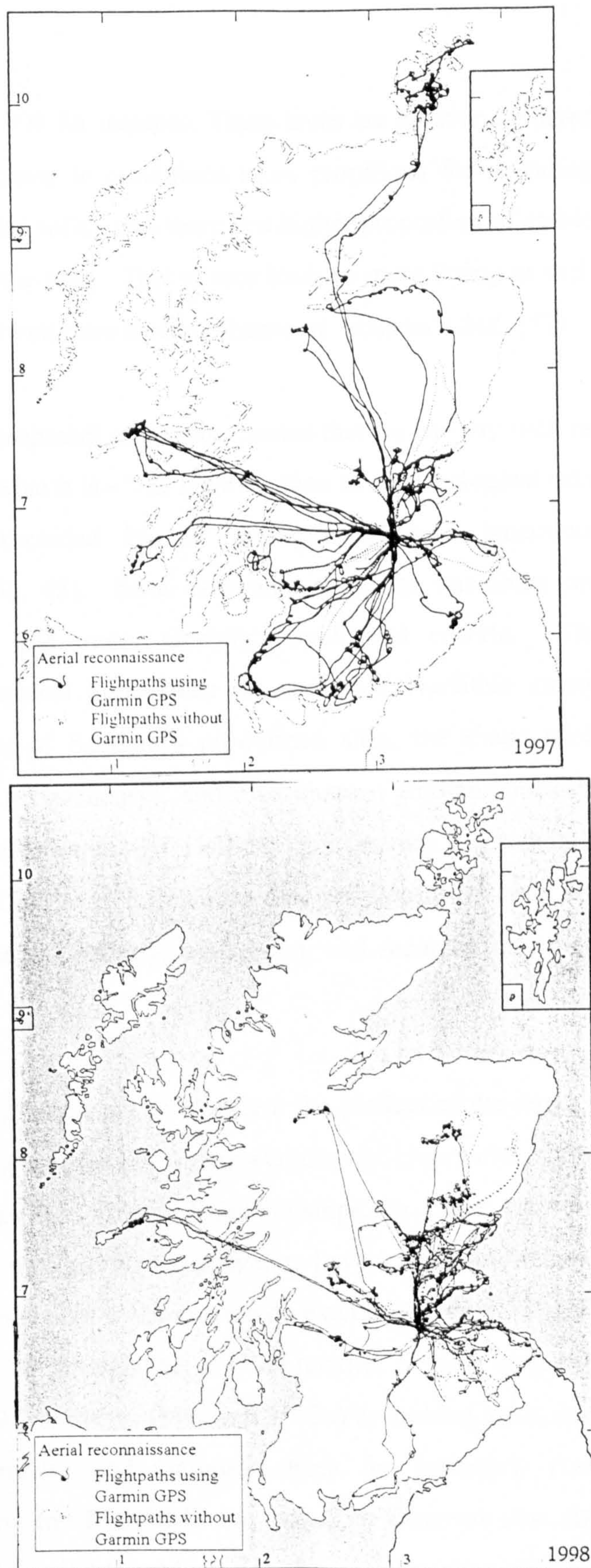


Figure 3.3 The flight paths of sorties flown by the RCAHMS in 1997 and 1998 (from RCAHMS 1997, fig. 24 and 1998, fig. 37).



## Introduction

reconnaissance for 1997 and 1998 for instance. These areas are on average dryer than the west of Scotland leading to conditions more propitious for revealing cropmarks - drier, better drained soils - and there is a higher proportion of arable agriculture to grazing than in the west. This in turn leads to more flying in such areas, with the knowledge that you have a better chance of 'success' (*ibid.* 157).

Secondly, the very nature of cropmark enclosures means that we can say with no certainty how old a site is or what it is - "the identification of archaeological sites from cropmark evidence recorded by air photography is a hazardous undertaking" (Maxwell 1983c, 45). Save excavated sites, the remainder are included on morphological and, more recently, topological criteria. The cropmark sites have the physical appearance of *confirmed* Neolithic cursus monuments (and in the case of Scotland's pit-defined sites, the shape takes precedence over the nature of boundary), and also share a similar landscape position, as I previously mentioned (S. Halliday per. comm.). Cropmarks themselves may not show all of the archaeological features present but they also tend to show different phases of activity, juxtaposed, and recorded as a two-dimensional image.

Therefore, the sites discussed below are to an extent the product of the range of aerial photography, often unsatisfactory interpretation, or cropmarks simply being missed - *cursus* sites lost amidst Roman camps, or other cropmark complexes, only now being noticed. New discoveries have led to an increased awareness that cursus monuments of a wide nature do exist in Scotland. This has led to further new discoveries through the re-interpretation of both cropmarks (Armit 1995; RCAHMS 1997) and sites (Maxwell 1983a) or looking again at old photographs (see the Dumfries and Galloway sites for instance). Aerial reconnaissance sponsored by the RCAHMS has begun to discover new sites, particularly in Aberdeenshire and Morayshire (Brophy 1999b). New sites have also been identified through rescue excavations and desktop surveys by commercial units and various other archaeological groups (see for instance Terry 1997; Campbell 1996; Topen 1995).



However, we must remain aware of what Maxwell described as "temporarily heightened powers of perception" (1979, 41), a double-edged sword which leads to both exciting discoveries and inappropriate interpretations. Many sites are classified as *cursus* monuments simply because they are rectilinear (*there is nothing else to call them*) regardless of size, form or location, reflected to an extent in the discussed sites. This must be borne in mind with the Scottish *corpus*. I would not expect all of these sites to be Neolithic, nor do I expect them all to be what is traditionally regarded as a *cursus*. With these cautions in mind, I will now go on to look at the sites themselves from the south to the north (as they steadily become more varied and unusual...).

### 3.3. Dumfries and Galloway

The *cursus* sites in Dumfries and Galloway are mostly found in the Nith valley. The others tend to be on the coastal fringes or smaller river valleys, a distribution which must be remembered reflects the conditions for aerial photography. Indeed, the sites are all known only as cropmarks, with the exception of two of the potential 'bank barrow' sites. Some form ephemeral markings, only intermittently visible, and few are known to their full extent, terminal to terminal. As a consequence, they are in the process of being re-constructed through aerial reconnaissance with different years bringing new views of the same sites. This creates the possibility of different interpretations and re-constructions. Many of the interpretations of these aerial photographs are the work of myself, or a few members of RCAHMS staff.

During the nineties, a small number of pit-defined rectilinear enclosures have been discovered in Scotland, mostly discovered through the re-assessing of older aerial photographs for the RCAHMS *East Dumfries-shire* volume (1997). Previously, only a relatively small rectilinear enclosure within **Fourmerkland** Roman temporary camp had been recorded (fig. 3.4). Its dimensions of only 50m by 18m led Loveday (1985) to include it at the very minimum limit of his minor *cursus* class. One side intersects the cropmark of a ring-ditch which it divides



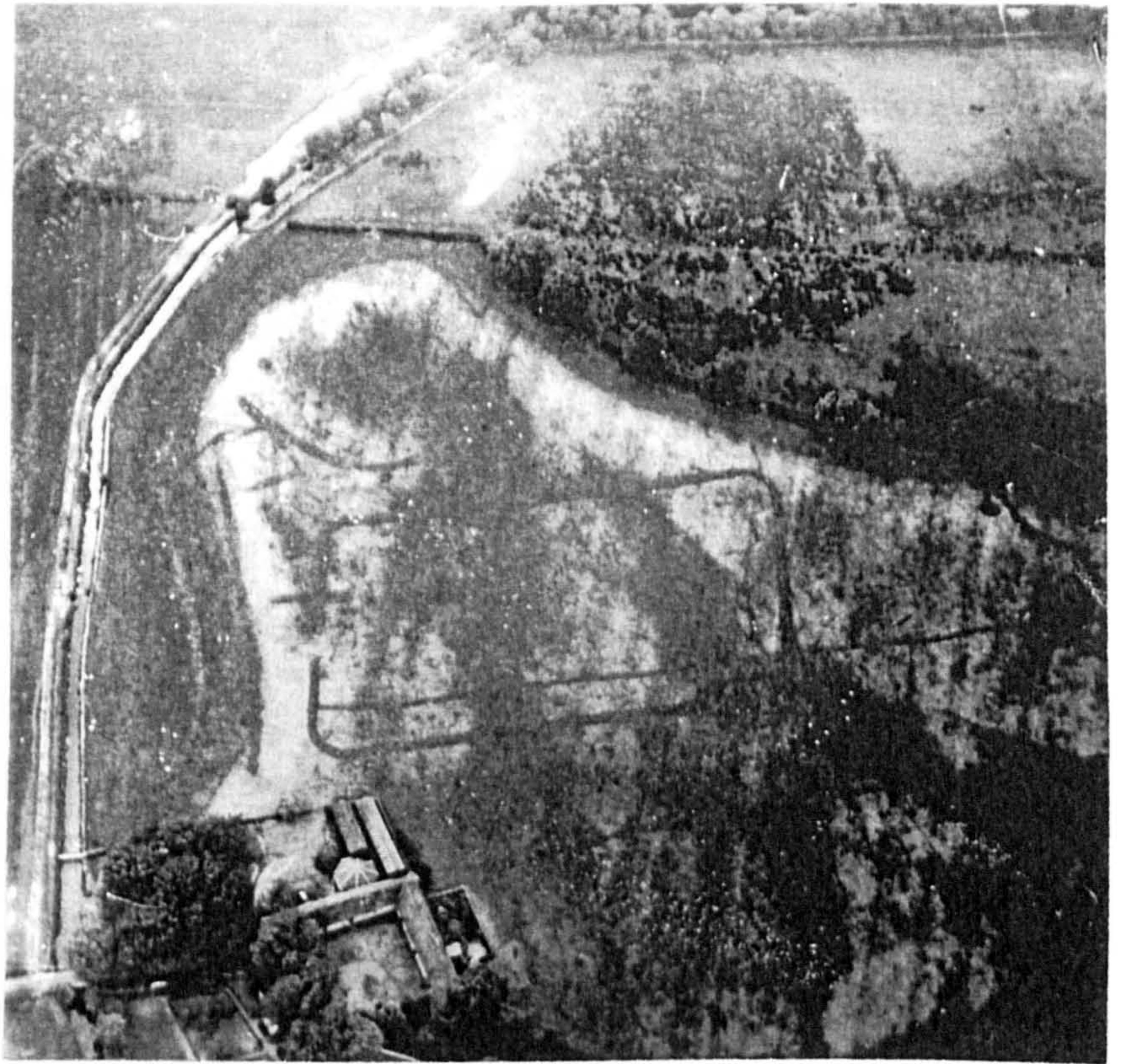


Figure 3.4 (top left) Fourmerkland planned at 1:10560 with north to the right (Loveday 1985, 444).

Plate 3.1 (top right) The parallel linear cropmarks running across the Roman Camp are of Gallaberry cursus (© CUCAP).

Plate 3.2 Tibbers aerial photograph (AP) also showing a palisaded enclosure in the bottom right-hand corner (© RCAHMS).



cleanly in half, although it is unclear which, if any, was the earlier. Fourmerkland lies 3 km west of Holywood village, in a location over-looking the Cluden Water.

A slightly larger pit-defined enclosure lies within a different Roman temporary camp, at **Trailflat**. The 'pits' are widely spaced and describe a rectilinear shape of about 50m by 20m. **Tibbers** sits in a large field immediately to the west of the River Nith, near Thornhill, amidst faint cropmarks of pit-alignments and enclosures, a circular palisaded enclosure, and old river channels (plate 3.2). This small rectilinear enclosure is one of several pitted features in this field, which also include an arc of pits which may form part of a large circular or oval pit enclosure.

Even more faint are the cropmarks of intermittent pit-alignments just north of **Kirkland Station** on the valley floor of the Cairn Water, located within a wide meander. A knoll to the east meant that the river would only have been visible to the north, blocked from view beyond the knoll. Pit-alignments form a curved terminal and parts of one side of the possible rectilinear enclosure that can be traced for at least 100m. Other alignments in the same fields do not quite fit into the preconceived plan of this interpretation however. This site has only ever been photographed once, in the excellent flight year of 1992.

To the east of the Nith valley, in a field full of cropmarks beside **Lochbrow** farm, runs a parallel pit-alignment, at least 200m long and 25m apart. It runs downhill and terminates literally overlooking the River Annan, less than 30m away. Reminiscent of the Angus pit-defined *cursus* sites (see fig. 3.12) it has an internal pitted division (which could also be interpreted as the terminal of a smaller enclosure). In the same field cropmarks of ring-ditches, pit-alignments and enclosures, and square and round barrows have been recorded, forming a 'cluster' of ritual and burial monuments (RCAHMS 1997).

Excavations along a pipeline route at **Fox Plantation** have produced evidence of a possible pit-defined *cursus*. It was noticed that two pit-alignments in different



trenches ran parallel to one another 30m apart. The western alignment has been recorded for 25m and consists of twenty-four pits in a rather irregular line 25m long. The pits in the eastern alignments are more widely spaced (fig. 8.6). The pits themselves were oval in plan and fairly shallow (although heavily truncated) and showed evidence of one episode of deliberate back-filling. The excavator suspected that these were contemporary and may represent part of a cursiform monument (MacGregor *et al* 1996).

Sites traditionally regarded as *cursus* monuments - defined by a continuous earthwork - in Dumfries and Galloway have all been found along the Nith valley, with one exception. The most northerly of these sites is **Gallaberry**, situated 4km to the NNE of Holywood, on the east side of the Nith. It is visible for at least 200m before disappearing out of aerial photographs to the north, and presumably stopping at the terrace edge looking over the valley floor at the southern end. The parallel ditches, 50m apart, pass through the edge of a small Roman temporary camp, which runs parallel to the *cursus*, perhaps suggesting the latter was still visible when the former was constructed (plate 3.2).

Around Holywood village itself there are a series of *cursus* monuments, all visible only as cropmarks, which were the focus of two seasons of excavation by in 1997 and 1998. Descriptions of the excavations of these sites are indebted to the assistance of Julian Thomas and Matt Leivers, and were drawn from various sources (Thomas 1998a, 1999; Thomas & Leivers 1998). Plate 3.3 shows an aerial view of the area around Holywood village.

**Holywood 1** *cursus* (also known as Newbridge *cursus*, and Holywood south or Holywood B) is visible as a distinctive rectangular enclosure, 290m long and 30-40m wide, with squared terminals and at least six causeways, three on either side. Cropmarks within include a ring-ditch in each terminal, north and south, and further small enclosures, pits and possible burials are recorded as cropmarks to the west. A dark marking in the northern half of the enclosure corresponds to a depression in the topography here, and a B road bisects the *cursus*. The ditch,





Plate 3.3 AP of Hollywood 1 and 2 cursus monuments viewed from the south-west. They are visible below and above the village of Hollywood (© RCAHMS).



upon closer inspection, is very irregular in width and far from perfectly straight, and this has the effect of narrowing and widening the enclosure slightly at various points.

Excavations concentrated on the northern terminal, opening a large trench containing the terminal, a causeway, and the ring-ditch. The ditch itself was very wide and fairly deep, with evidence of a fair degree of truncation. Fills showed signs of bank collapse towards the interior side, and there was a suggestion of a re-cut, although this was inconclusive. A series of pits or post-holes were found within the terminal area, and these could have related to each other in several ways, from near straight alignments, to a sub-circular setting. A group of other, larger pits, produced burnt material and carinated pot sherds. Excavation of the ring-ditch was inconclusive in showing whether it was a round barrow or not. These internal features were located where the bank would be expected to be, suggesting that they were not contemporary with the earthwork construction, and may represent earlier pre-enclosure activity.

On the other side of the village, a rail embankment and the A76 there is a second equally impressive monument, **Hollywood 2** (north / B). Slightly longer than Hollywood 1 (380m), and a similar width, it runs in a north-north-east - south-south-west alignment. A strip of trees, within which it changes direction by 5°, bisects it. In contrast to the other site it has rounded terminals, the northern one slightly flattened in on the east side. Only two causeways are visible, an opposed pair near the centre of the site. A circular mark within the southern terminal is visible as a slight depression on the ground. Internally, a line of pits flanks the interior side of the ditch around the northern third, first recognised by Loveday (1985). Various linear cropmarks and cultivation remains have been recorded in the same field to the east.

Two trenches were opened in the northern half, one concentrating on the terminal area, the other investigating the eastern terminal. At the terminal a V-shaped re-cut appears to have been made into an original U-shaped ditch which still



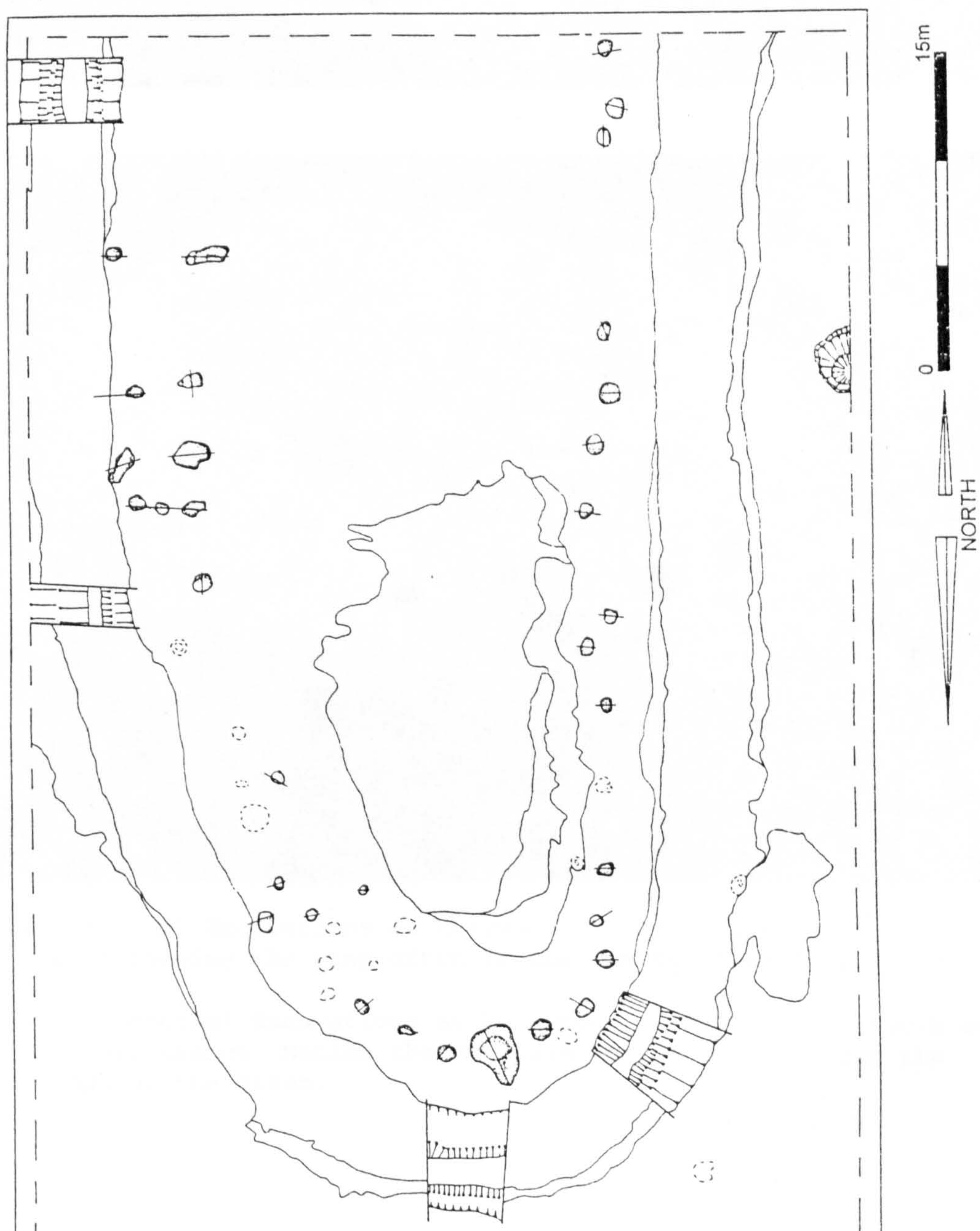


Figure 3.5 Excavations at Hollywood 1 (top) and Hollywood 2 (bottom) (from Thomas 1999).

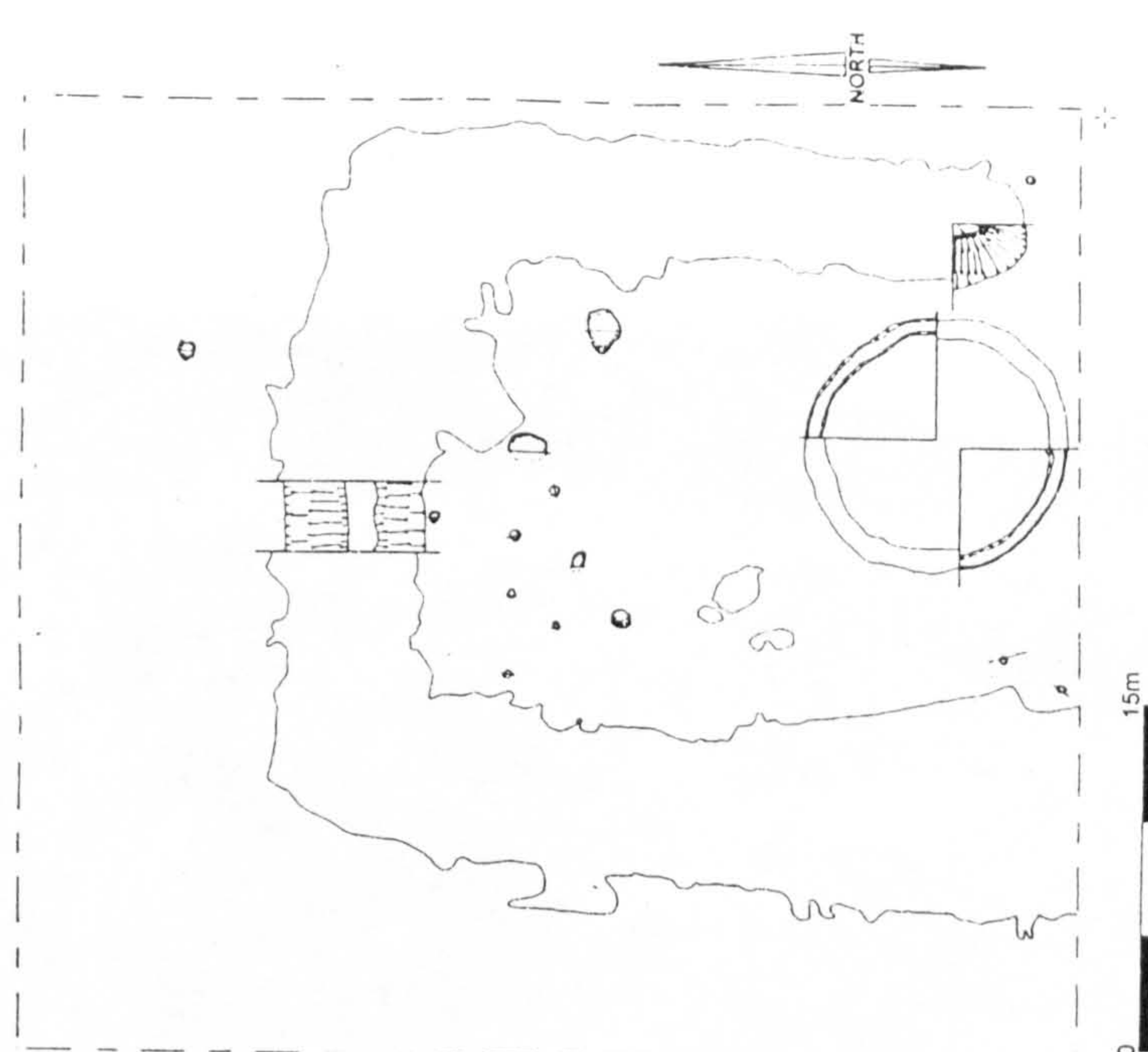






Plate 3.4 (top) Excavations at Hollywood 1, 1997. Looking north over the trench showing the ring-ditch in the centre, framed by the cursus ditch.

Plate 3.5 (bottom) Excavations at Hollywood 2, 1997. A view south over the terminal trench. Notice the unexcavated post-holes along the inner edge of the ditch.



survives to a depth of 1.45m, notwithstanding truncation. A series of pits and post-holes were excavated in the interior area, far more than are visible on any aerial photograph. The features recorded as cropmarks were shown to be post-holes and some had evidence of post burning *in situ*.

Adjacent, much larger ramped post-holes and a series of strange features with unusual phasing and shapes were also recorded near the ditch. Further post-holes following the ditch line, in the location of the bank, suggested to the excavators that these were part of a bank revetment (Thomas 1999, 110), although they could also be interpreted as pre-cursus settings. Excavations at the 'entrance' revealed again that the ditch was re-cut, with a different shape from that recorded nearer the terminal. A series of deposited artefacts (including early Neolithic pot sherds, pebbles and flint chips) were located on the floor of the re-cut. A line of small post-holes ran away from the ditch, although the stratigraphic relationship between the two was impossible to determine. These may have partially blocked, or controlled movement through, the causeway.

A kilometre to the west, located on the edge of the river terrace overlooking the Nith valley, a pit complex including a possible pit-defined *cursus* and an avenue was discovered by aerial photography in 1992. The *cursus* (**Holm**) consists of a parallel pair of pit-alignments, about 90m long and only 15m apart, with a curving terminal. The much narrower avenue intersects this terminal area and there is a third alignment parallel to the *cursus* that runs 20m to the west. It intersects a ring-ditch and the avenue aligns on a further ring-ditch.

Excavations concentrated on relationships between the avenue and *cursus* and between the ring-ditch and pit-alignment. The pits of the *cursus* were shown to have a complicated sequence of usage involving the erection and burning of posts with some pits showing three instances of this. The third parallel row was associated with this monument but showed less complexity in phasing. The relationship of post-holes and the ring-ditch was much more complex, with sequences of timber circles, ring-ditches and post-holes to the south-east of the





*Plate 3.6 (top)* Excavations at Holm. Looking east across the trench.

*Plate 3.7 (bottom)* Excavation at Holm. Two post-holes in the northern cursus line, pre-excavation.



*cursus*. The pits along the avenue, by way of contrast, had only one cut. One of these pits coincided with the location of a post-hole, cutting through it. Thomas (1998a) suggests that these short-lived phases of activity were a continual re-working and recreating of the monument in a special place (see plates 3.6 and 3.7).

On the southern side of Dumfries, and the western side of the Nith, is a large *cursus* enclosure beside a farm called **Curriestanes**. It runs for about 300m in an east - west direction towards a rounded terminal with a distinct causeway in its centre. It is unusually wide for a *cursus* - 100m - giving an enclosure with a known area of at least 3 hectares. The ditch appears to be both very wide (at least 7m) and very irregular (fig. 3.6). It has the appearance of being composed of series of short segments of ditch. It runs across a rather flat low-lying uninspiring piece of land built over in parts by roads, a golf course, and under threat from housing development. A solitary cropmark ring-ditch lies just to the south of the only visible terminal, and assorted indeterminate cropmarks have been recorded to the north.

Further south, on a hillside overlooking the Nith estuary and Solway Firth at **Cavens**, a large possible *cursus* enclosure has been identified from only two aerial photographs. Described as a 'U-shaped enclosure' (Truckell 1984), this site is roughly over 100m long and rather unusually runs uphill on the lower slopes of Criffel, the highest point in the local area. The dominant location of this site surveys the Nith estuary and Solway to the south and east, and aligns towards the west side of Criffel inland. Its hillside location lead to it being dismissed as a *cursus* by the RCAHMS (S. Halliday pers. comm.). In plan, the northern half appears similar in shape to the N terminal of Thornborough *cursus* (Vatcher 1960). It is near the possible bank barrow, Redbank (see below).

**Cadgill**, a small rectilinear enclosure just north of the English border, was initially identified as the cropmark of a plantation bank in the NMRS. At least 180m long, and 17m wide, it has been re-interpreted as a possible *cursus* because



of an apparent angled terminal at the east-south-east end (fig. 3.6; RCAHMS 1997).

Three narrow recilinear enclosures, all identified in the 1990's, have been regarded as being narrow enough to be at least related to bank barrows, but also have enough rectilinearity to be discussed in the same breath as *cursus* monuments. **Springbank**, the most westerly known *cursus* in Dumfries and Galloway, situated immediately to the south-west of Stranraer, meanders up a slope perpendicular to the contours. It climbs 15m in just less than its visible length of 90m. The enclosure is relatively narrow, and in plan, it curves to an elongated S-shape (see plate 3.8). The faint cropmark of a small possibly circular shaped enclosure can be detected abutting the western uphill end and another indistinct cropmark sits at the other end. A presumably later settlement enclosure has been recorded in the same field.

A very similar, and much more clearly defined pair of parallel ditches has been recorded on one solitary aerial photograph two kilometres west of Cavens *cursus* (see above) on the lower slopes of Drumbuie, a low hill. This site, **Redbank**, is also S-shaped in plan, although longer and wider than Springbank (150m by 25m), and vaguely reminiscent of Holywood 2 in the clarity of its ditches. The wide ditches move towards a possibly rounded or even 'pointed' terminal area overlooking Redbank burn (plate 3.9). This site is still just visible on the ground as slight depressions (A. Gannon pers. comm).

By far the largest of these narrow sites is found just north of Eskdalemuir, a small village to the north-east of Lockerbie. Two lengthy banks on either side of the river White Esk, identified individually but thought to represent two halves of the same monument (RCAHMS 1997, represent potentially the best surviving traces of such a monument in Scotland outwith The Cleaven Dyke in Perthshire. The site is referred to as a 'cursiform earthwork' in the NMRS, and the results of their survey are shown in figure 3.7.



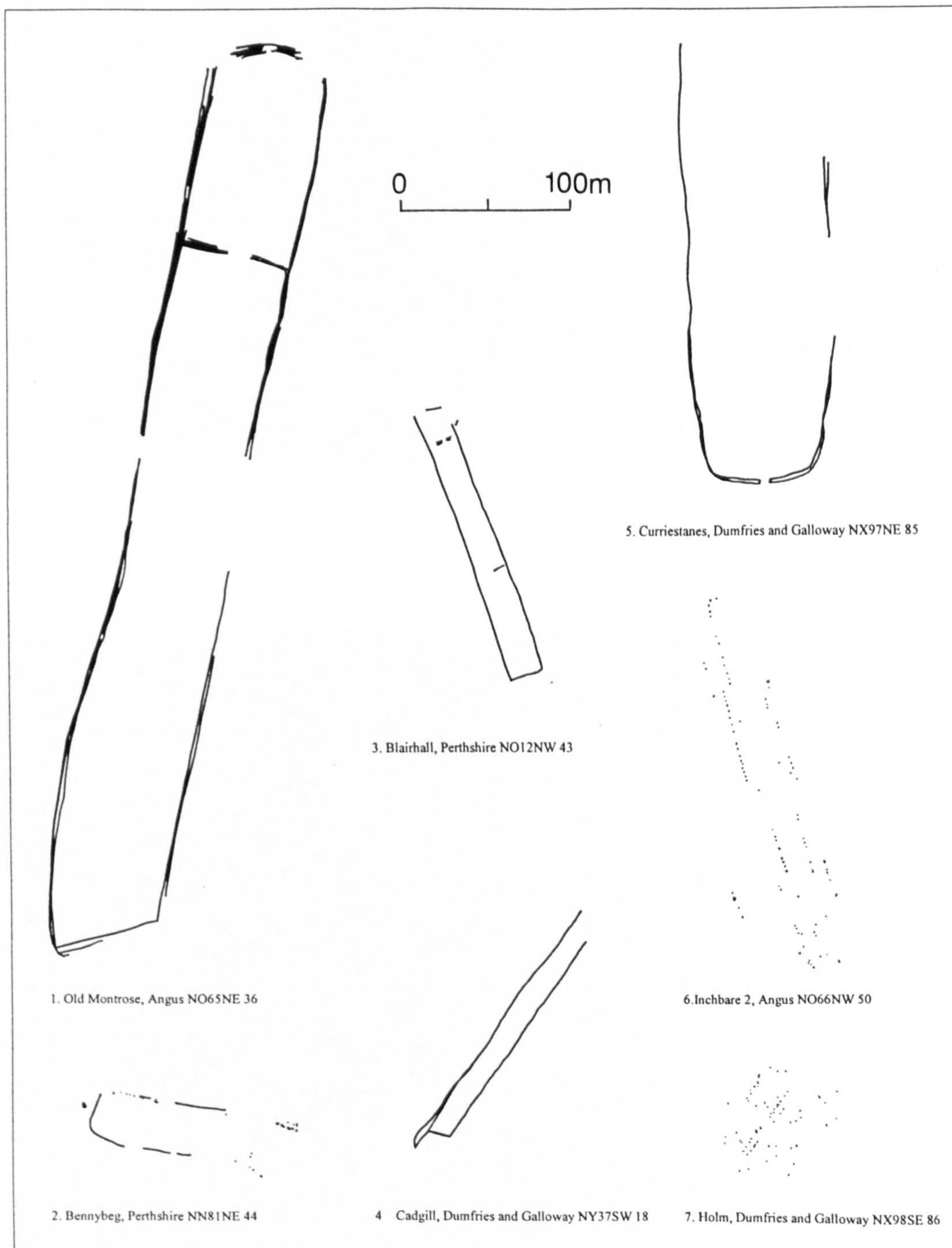


Figure 3.6 Transcriptions of some rectilinear enclosures interpreted as cursus monuments. They are displayed as a typical typological grouping. North is to the right-hand side of the page.





*Plate 3.8 (top) AP of Springbank (© RCAHMS).  
Plate 3.9 (bottom) AP of Redbank (© RCAHMS).*



The south-western terminal, **Tom's Knowe**, was initially interpreted as a burial cairn built on top of a natural knoll, and in fact where the topography stopped and the monument started was the subject of much ambiguity (for more on this, see chapter 7, and Yates 1984). However, re-evaluation and survey undertaken by the RCAHMS (1992, 1997) recorded a long mound running from the 'cairn' into forestry and then sharply downhill towards the valley floor. This mound, visible as a combination of earthwork and cropmark for at least 255m, survives to a height of only 0.5m in the forestry. A flanking ditch on either side, giving the monument a width of 20m, runs around the terminal.

A 'matching' mound was also discovered on the opposite side of the valley running along a spur known as **Lamb Knowe**. Terminating at a slightly oval mound it runs downhill over undulating topology and is visible on the ground for 650m (plate 3.10). Again it has a width of about 20m including central mound and flanking ditches. It may be possible to extend the monument by up to a further 200m from snow-marks and cropmarks right down to the current valley floor. If initially one unitary site (and this is impossible to prove or discount because of large alluvial deposits on the valley floor since the Neolithic), it would have had a length of about 2.1km and crossed (or been crossed by) the River White Esk.

### 3.4. Central Scotland

Recent discoveries have extended the distribution of sites into Lanarkshire and western Scotland.

#### 3.4.1. Ayrshire

One cursus site has been identified in Ayrshire, at **Drybridge** (see Brophy forthcoming a and b). This wide enclosure is defined by a pair of parallel ditches 60m apart running for at least 250m. They reach, what I would call, a topographical terminal at a terrace edge overlooking the River Irvine. The cursus passes symmetrically between two circular enclosures, at least one of which may be a small henge. It runs across fields partially enclosed by a meander,



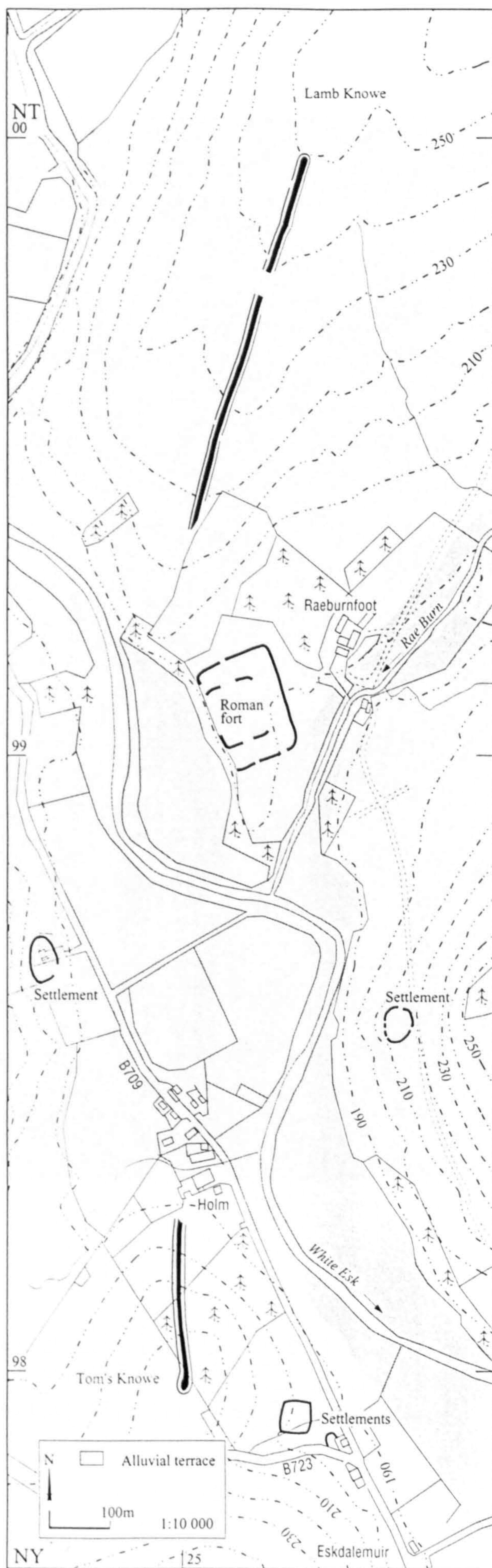


Figure 3.7 Tom's Knowe and Lamb Knowe (from RCAHMS 1997, fig. 99).





Plate 3.10 (top) Aerial view of Lamb Knowe's looking south along the monument. The ditches are indicated by parallel lines of bushes (© RCAHMS).



surrounded by water on three sides, and a series of lithic scatters of unsure date have been located in the vicinity (MacNeill 1976). One of these lies on the projected line of the cursus, and may have been enclosed or passed over by it.

### 3.4.2 Lanarkshire

Two further sites in south-west Scotland have been recorded in the last five years, both from re-evaluations of older aerial photographs. At **West Lindsaylands**, a few kilometres west of Biggar in a fairly rich area for cropmarks, the faint traces of a small pit-defined rectilinear enclosure appear just tens of metres from the River Clyde and closer to a so-called promontory fort (which has recently been identified as a possible causewayed enclosure (Gordon Barclay pers. comm.)).

An archaeological field survey of Cathkin Braes Country Park, on the southern fringes of Glasgow, included the discovery of a long, narrow rectilinear enclosure on a vertical aerial photograph, now situated along the fairway of **Blairbeth** golf course. Defined by an apparently continuous ditch, it measures about 165m by 16m and has two rounded ends. A possible ring-ditch lies adjacent to the southern ditch of the enclosure. It lies in a spectacular location, across a prominent ridge that would have commanded fine views over the Clyde valley to the north (Topen 1995, 1996). It does have the morphology of a 'bank barrow' and is closely reminiscent of another possible bank barrow site in Fife, Kilmany. However, it does run parallel to two field boundaries in the 1945 photograph and Topen (1995) suggests the alternative interpretation of a shelterbelt.

### 3.4.3. Stirlingshire

At **Bannockburn** a pair of 'enclosures', one pit-defined and the other post-defined, were excavated in 1984-5 in the wake of both housing and road developments, although not published until recently (Rideout 1997). Sitting on a spur between two streams, on a raised beach overlooking the Forth valley, the enclosures were first identified by aerial photography in 1976-7. During the excavations, a series of trenches were cut across both sites (fig. 3.9).



↑ N

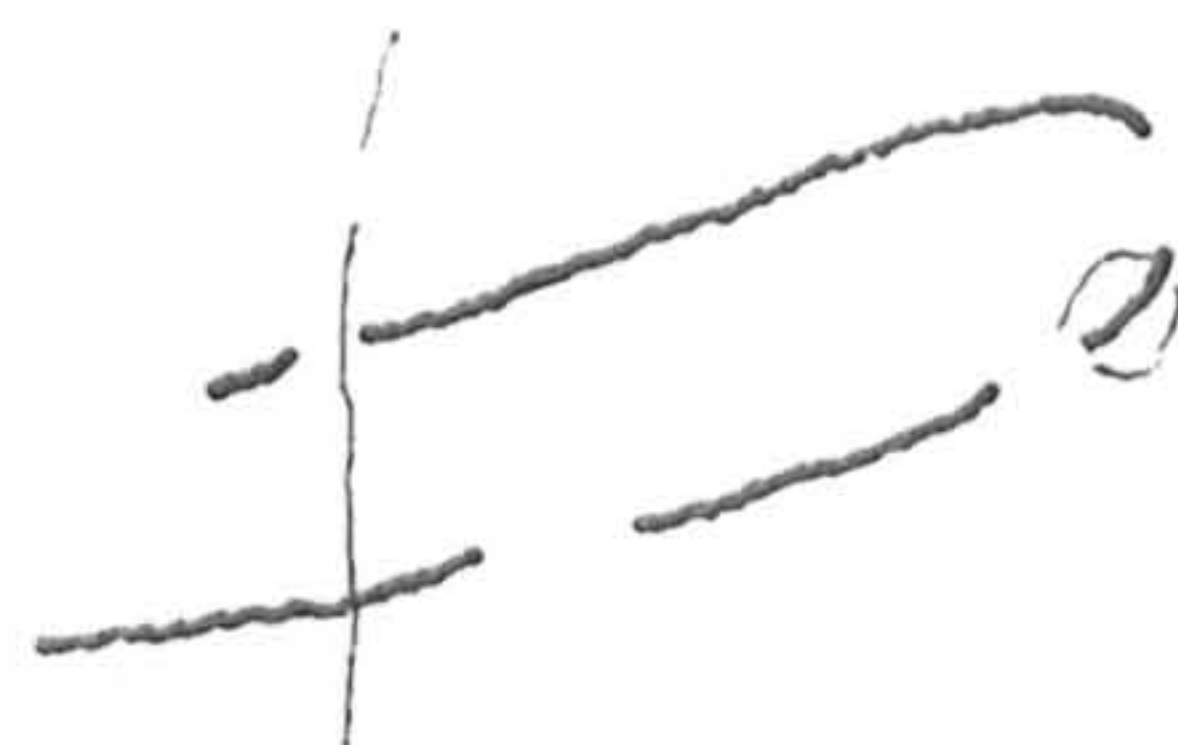


Figure 3.8 (top) East Linton cursus? Manual transcriptions of Drylawhill and Preston Mains at 1:10000 scale.

Plate 3.11 (bottom) AP of the possible curved eastern terminal of Preston Mains (© RCAHMS).



Enclosure 1, a U-shaped setting of pits measuring 30m by 25m, consisted of fifty pits and an interior scattering of post- and stake-holes and shallow pits. Tavener (1987) identified three phases of activity in the boundary pits. As with Holm not all features showed all phases of activity, although all were assumed to have a Phase 1.

Phase 1 involved the cutting of a series of large pits, which eventually naturally silted up to subsoil level. The pits were up to 1.76m wide and 0.95m deep. The few artifacts associated with this phase, including a few Neolithic pot sherds, are poorly contextualised. The pits were then re-cut (Phase 2) and had a stone (or timber) lining placed around the steep pit sides. Several individual burning incidents appear to have taken place within the pit. Material from pit P6 produced AMS dates with a mean range of 4034-3816 cal BC (Rideout 1997, 37). Found within this phase in a few pits were Neolithic pot sherds and pieces of worked chert and pitchstone. Again they were allowed to fill up (or may have been back-filled with topsoil) to the subsoil level. Phase 3 may or may not simply be a later aspect of Phase 2. It often appears to have involved only slight re-cuts into the top pit fills, often containing bands of charcoal. Once again, Neolithic pot sherds (fig. 3.10) were found and flakes of mudstone, flint, pitchstone and chert. A few more flakes of chert were discovered in the group of internal negative features.

From the pottery found, Cowie (in Rideout, 1997) suggests a chronology for this phasing activity starting with the phase 1 pits. The next intervention is the activities creating the debris (possibly occupation debris) and stake-holes in the central area, followed by the re-digging and lining of the boundary pits and subsequent re-cutting (*ibid.* 46). All pottery discovered in the pits and features of Enclosure 1 are, in his opinion, Early to Middle Neolithic, and mostly plain bowl sherds (Cowie 1993).

The second enclosure, end on and only 10m from enclosure 1, ran in an east-south-east - west-north-west for at least 90m, and was up to 27.5m wide with one visible square terminal. It was defined by a series of timber posts in irregularly



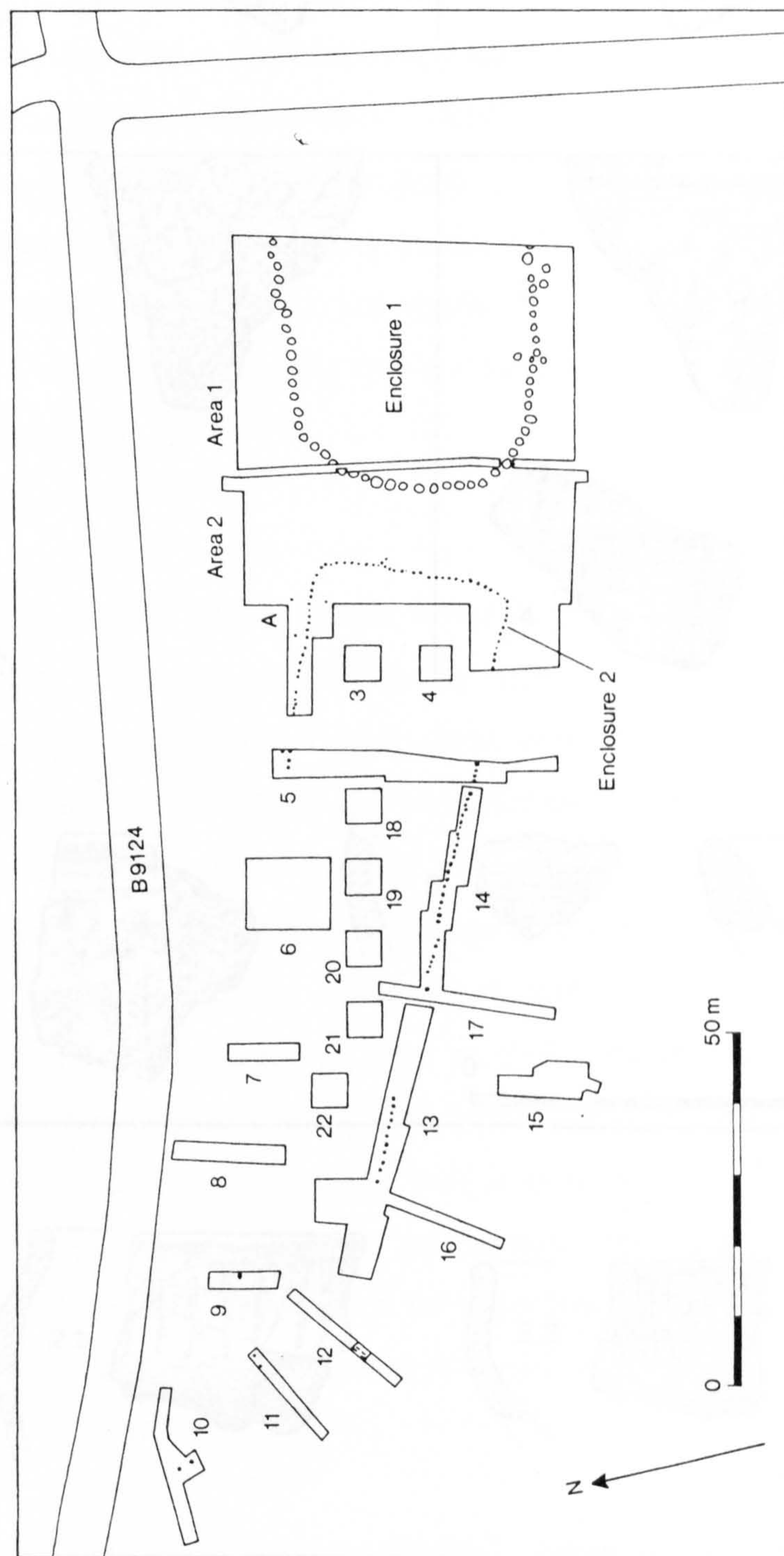
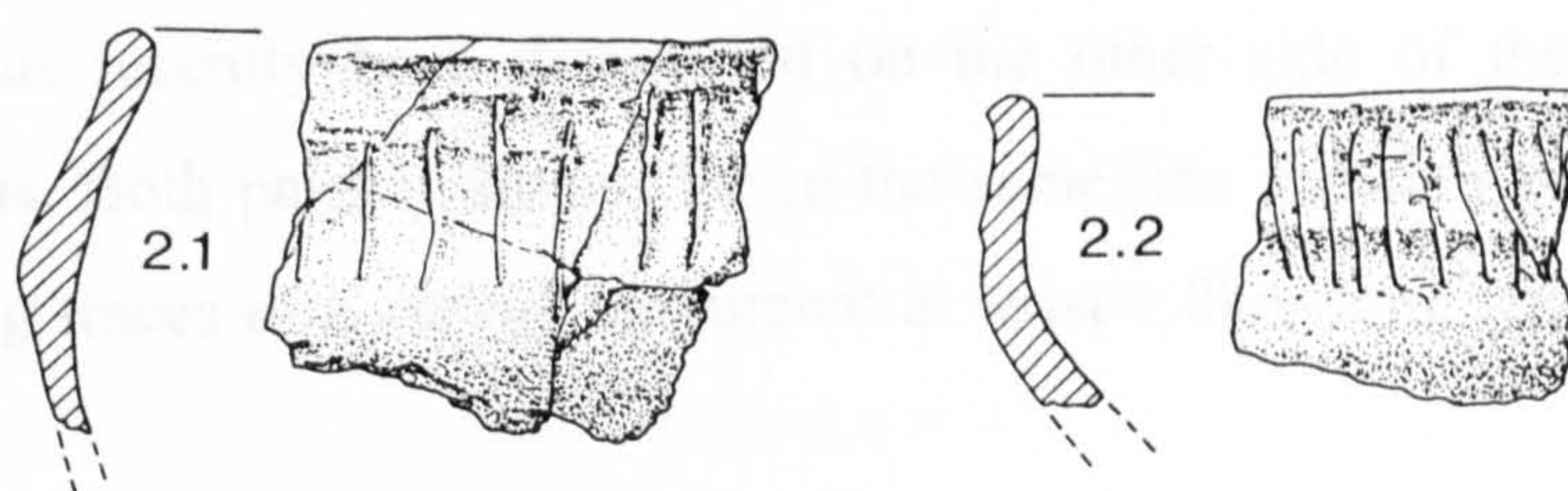
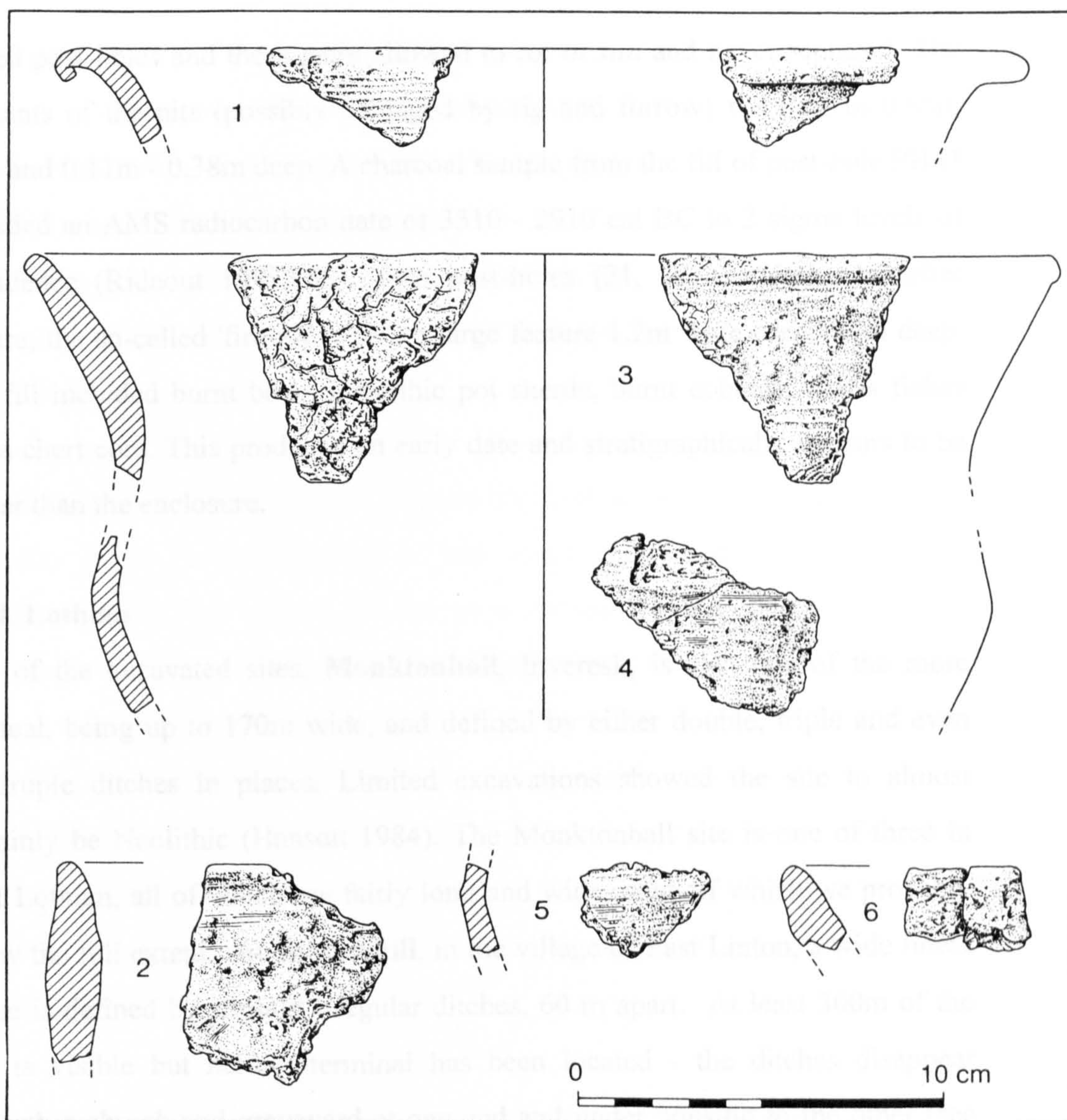


Figure 3.9 Bannockburn excavations. The location of the trenches and excavated features (from Rideout 1997, illus.3).





*Figure 3.10* Pottery found at Bannockburn (1-6) and Douglasmuir (2.1-2.2)(from Cowie 1993, illus.6 and illus.2).



spaced post-holes and these were allowed to rot *in situ* and never replaced. The remnants of the pits (possibly damaged by rig and furrow) were up to 0.85m wide and 0.11m - 0.38m deep. A charcoal sample from the fill of post-hole PH43 provided an AMS radiocarbon date of 3510 - 2910 cal BC to 2 sigma levels of confidence (Rideout 1997, 53). Two post-holes (21, 22) cut into an earlier feature, the so-called 'fire-pit' (P59), a large feature 1.2m wide and 0.34m deep. The fill included burnt bone, Neolithic pot sherds, burnt cobbles, cherts flakes and a chert core. This produced an early date and stratigraphically appears to be earlier than the enclosure.

### 3.4.4. Lothian

One of the excavated sites, **Monktonhall**, Inveresk, is also one of the more unusual, being up to 170m wide, and defined by either double, triple and even quadruple ditches in places. Limited excavations showed the site to almost certainly be Neolithic (Hanson 1984). The Monktonhall site is one of three in East Lothian, all of which are fairly long and wide, none of which we probably know the full extent. At **Drylawhill**, in the village of East Linton, a wide linear space is defined by slightly irregular ditches, 60 m apart. At least 300m of the site is visible but neither terminal has been located - the ditches disappear beneath a church and graveyard at one end and under housing to the other (see plate 6.14). A very similar pair of ditches, both in terms of distance apart and irregularity, has recently been discovered on the other side of the village at **Preston Mains**. Both pairs of ditches lie on the same line and may represent the only remaining traces of a *cursus* monument at least 1.8km long (fig. 3.8, plate 3.11).

The final known site in Lothian was identified from National Coal Board aerial photographs at **Kingslaw**, and is visible as a pair of parallel slightly irregular ditches running for up to 750 m, 50 m apart (R. McCullagh pers. comm.).



### 3.5. Argyll

Few *cursus* sites have been identified on the west coast of Scotland (with the notable exceptions of Drybridge and the Springbank) which must at least partially reflect the poor aerial coverage of the western lowlands. Two sites recorded in Argyll since 1996 have come to light through a desktop study of a river valley (from vertical air photos) and through a chance find in a rescue excavation.

**Dunadd** *cursus* lies 800m east of Dunadd itself, on a particularly narrow stretch of valley floor, running parallel to and about 100m from the River Add. Campbell (1996) first noticed the site on a vertical photograph taken in 1948. “The feature is aligned NW-SE, and consists of two straight sub-parallel dark features 1-2m wide (probably ditches) which are 150m long and 10-15m wide” (*ibid.* 22). (Incidentally, morphologically this is a bank barrow, not a *cursus*). It noticeably widens away from the rounded NW terminal and Campbell suggests it was open at this end. It has been suggested that the *cursus* itself aligns on a possible avenue at Ballymeanoch, 3km to the north-west (Campbell 1996; Abernethy 1995).

Further north in the Kilmartin valley, just outside of Kilmartin village is a quarry, **Upper Largie**, where on-going excavations have revealed a U-shaped setting of posts, interpreted as part of a *cursus*-like monument by the excavator (Terry 1997, 1998). It underlies a post-circle and avenue, and forms a rather strange shaped terminal, with the sides curving inwards to meet a straight terminal line (fig. 3.11). These post-holes are as yet unexcavated.

### 3.6. Tayside and Fife

Of the twenty *cursus* monuments in Tayside, thirteen are pit-defined and seven ditch-defined. In particular, the pit-defined sites dominate the known cropmark record of Angus and Dundee, nine to three. All sites (save one) have low-lying locations near or on river flood plains and terraces. Three have been excavated – Douglasmuir, Milton of Rattray and the Cleaven Dyke.



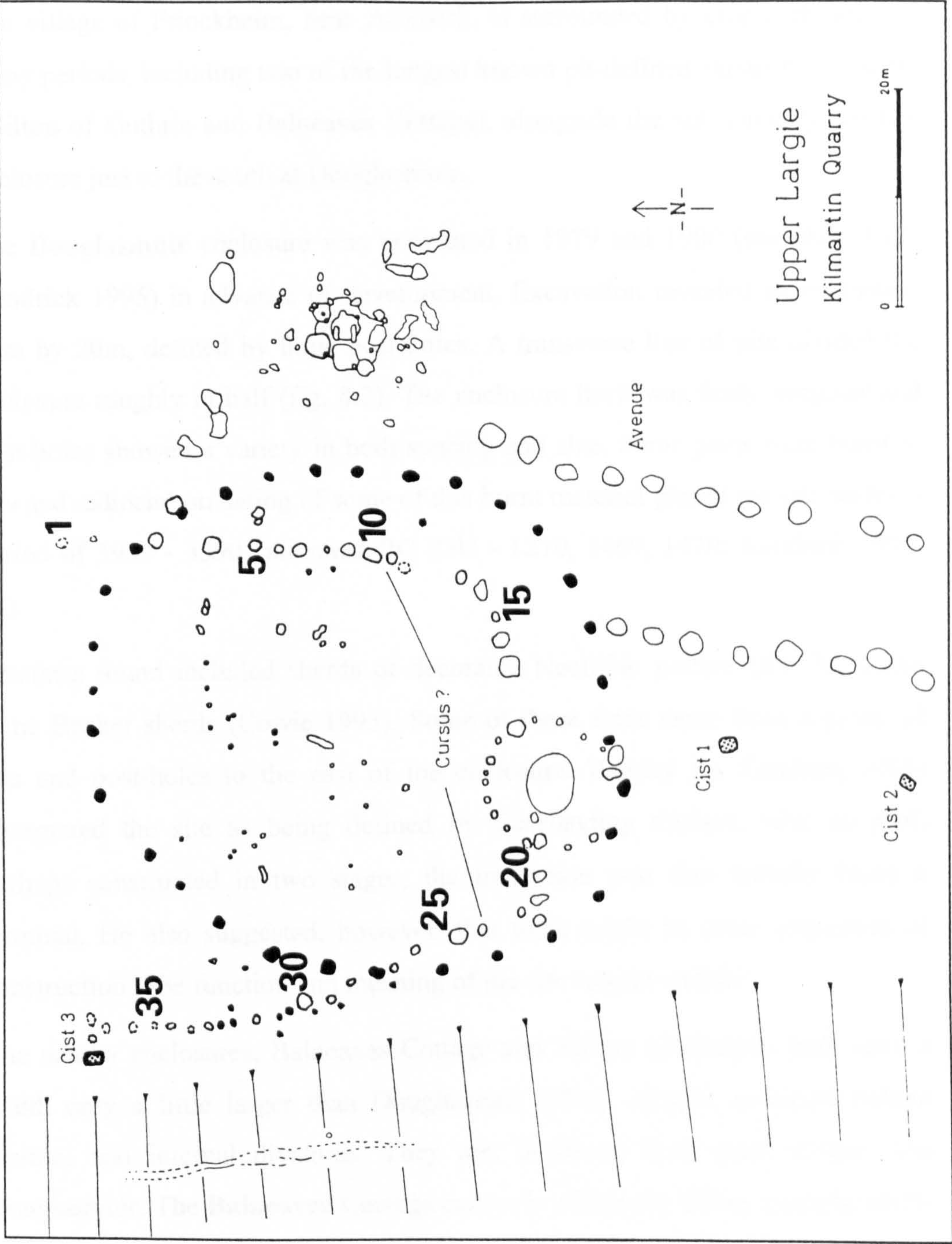


Figure 3.11 Excavations at Upper Largie (after Terry 1997, fig.8).



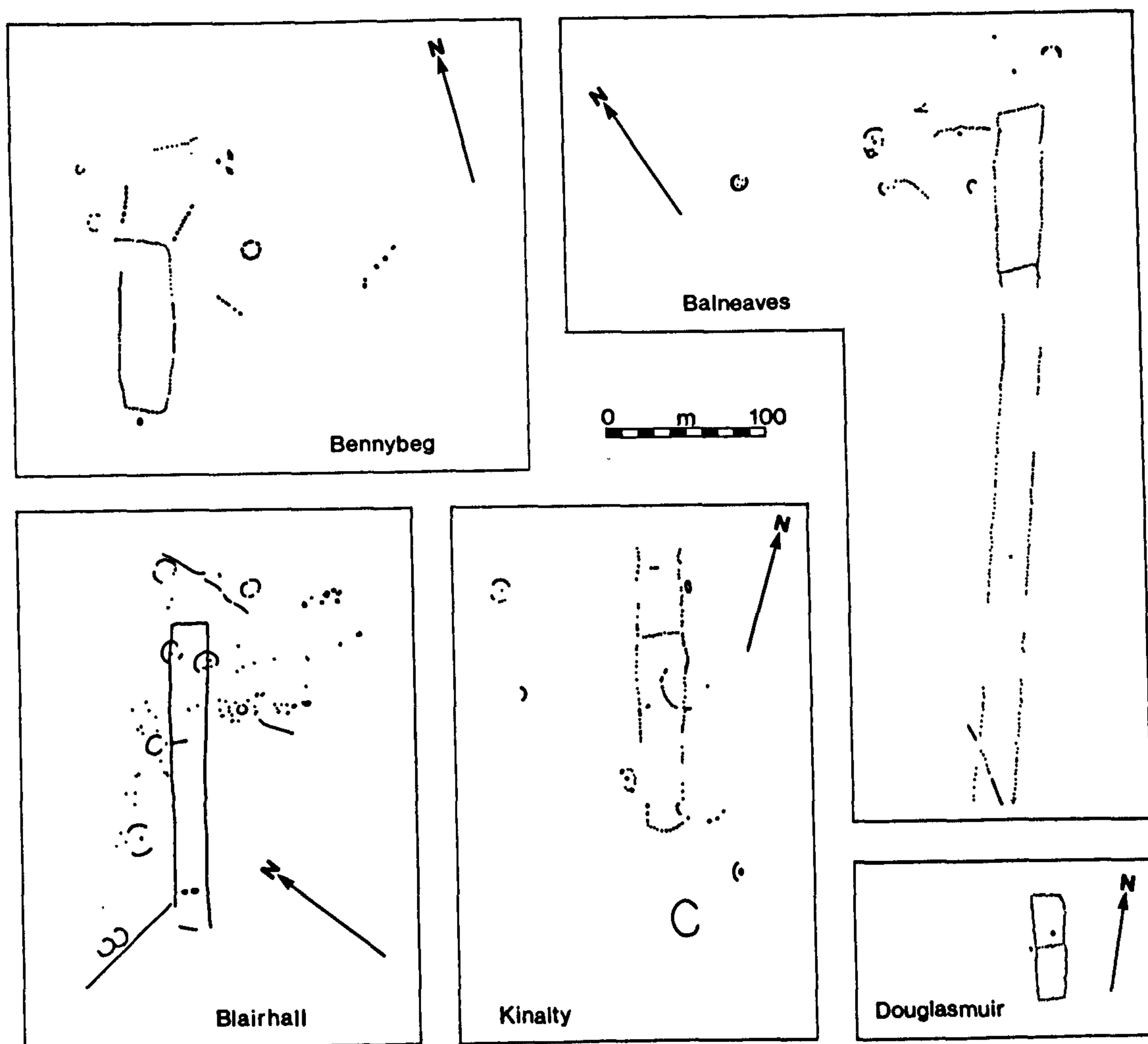
The village of Friockheim, near Arbroath, is surrounded by cropmark sites of many periods, including two of the longest known pit-defined cursus monuments (Milton of Guthrie and Balneaves Cottage), alongside the substantially smaller enclosure just to the south at Douglasmuir.

The **Douglasmuir** enclosure was excavated in 1979 and 1980 (see plate 3.12; Kendrick 1995) in advance of development. Excavation revealed an enclosure, 65m by 20m, defined by large post-holes. A transverse line of pits divided the enclosure roughly in half (fig. 8.2). The enclosure itself was fairly irregular and post-holes showed a variety in both spacing and size. Some posts were burnt *in situ* and radiocarbon dating of some of this burnt material placed the site within a period of 3930 - 3390 calibrated BC (GU - 1210, 1469, 1470; Kendrick 1995, 33).

Artefacts found included sherds of decorated Neolithic pottery (fig. 3.10) and some Beaker sherds (Cowie 1993). Some of these finds came from a group of pits and post-holes to the east of the enclosure. Barclay (in Kendrick 1995) interpreted the site as being defined by freestanding timbers, with no roof, perhaps constructed in two stages, the transverse post line initially being a terminal. He also suggested, however, that there might be other sequences of construction. The function and meaning of the site remain unclear.

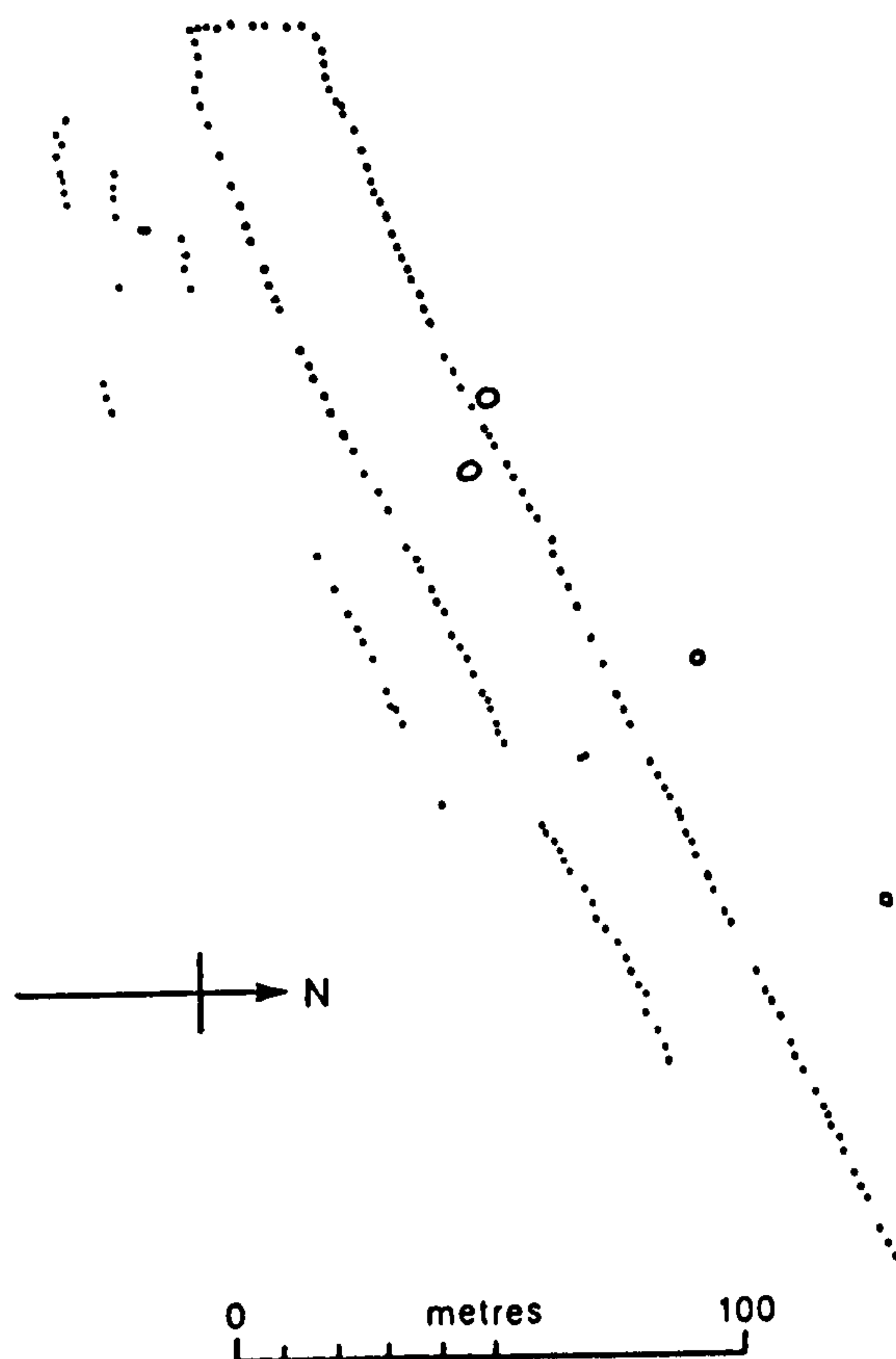
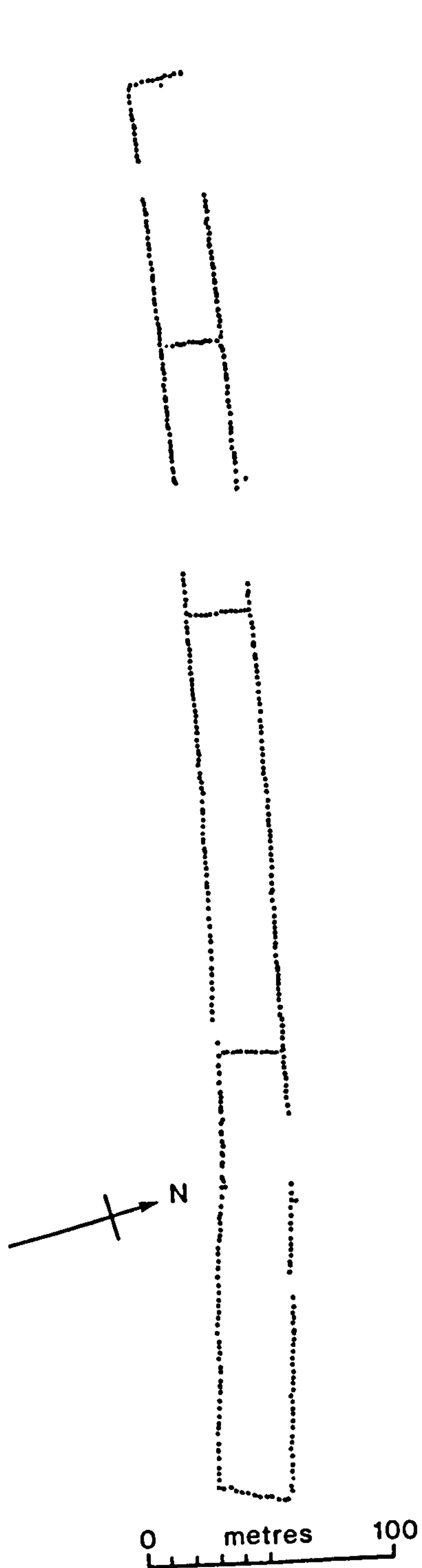
The nearby enclosures, Balneaves Cottage and Milton of Guthrie, both have a width only a little larger than Douglasmuir (25m), straight terminals (where visible) and internal divisions. They are, however, both much longer than Douglasmuir. The **Balneaves Cottage** *cursus* is visible for 500m, running north-east - south-west. One terminal is visible, at the north-east end, and about 100m short of this is the only internal division. The enclosure thus defined is just over 100m long and is slightly wider than the rest of the cursus, suggesting perhaps two phases of construction (fig. 3.12). It has been suggested (Loveday 1985) that Balneaves began as a relatively small Douglasmuir-type enclosure the longer *cursus* being added subsequently. The *cursus*, which lies amidst a great range of other cropmarks, runs across a gravel terrace above the Lunan Water, terminating short of both sides of the terrace.





*Figure 3.12* Plans of five possible *cursus* monuments from Tayside, based on RCAHMS transcriptions (from Kendrick 1995, illus.8).





*Figure 3.13* (left) Plan of Milton of Guthrie, based on a manual transcription by Gordon Barclay (from Brophy 1998a, illus.72).

*Figure 3.14* (above) Plan of Inchbare 1 based on RCAHMS Transcriptions (Brophy 1998a, Illus.73).



**Milton of Guthrie**, just over a kilometre to the north-west of Balneaves Cottage, consists of a rectilinear pit-defined enclosure, almost 600m long, with three visible internal transverse divisions splitting the enclosure into four compartments 105m to 185m long (fig. 3.13). Both terminals are square. It is cut by both the A933 and a rail embankment, and has a low-lying location, on the flood plain of the Lunan Water. The eastern terminal lies within 40m of the current course of the river and is within 150m of the confluence of the Lunan Water and the Vinny Water. (This site was originally interpreted as two individual *cursus* monuments, known as Milton 1 and 2 (RCAHMS 1978a)).

There are a further six pit-defined *cursus* sites in Angus, although very little is known of any of them. At **Newbarns**, just a few hundred metres from the current coastline and barely visible on aerial photographs, is a narrow rectilinear enclosure which appears to have at least one internal division. It lies alongside a series of other cropmarks, including an unenclosed settlement and souterrains (presumably much later than the *cursus*). It runs across a level area, and is lost from visibility as it nears the top of a slope leading down to sea level.

Further to the north, and inland again, near the village of Inchbare lies a series of parallel pit-alignments, all with a very similar east-north-east - west-south-west alignment. These are thought to form two pit-defined *cursus* monuments, known as **Inchbare 1 and 2**. One of these was first identified from aerial photographs taken by St Joseph (1976) who described it as an enclosure 20 to 30m wide, and 200 to 240m long. The other *cursus* (2) to the north has similar dimensions. Only one terminal is visible at either sites, a square terminal at the western end of Inchbare 1. The eastern end of this *cursus* may, unfortunately, have been destroyed by gas and water pipeline laying. Both sites consist of several parallel pit lines and Inchbare 2 is defined by at least six such lines which all follow the same orientation. It is not entirely clear which two actually define the enclosure, if indeed the boundaries were single or multiple alignments (figs. 3.6 and 3.14).

Both Inchbare 1 and 2 lie on the flat gravel flood plain of the West Water, just 1.5km west of its confluence with the North Esk. They are very close to the West



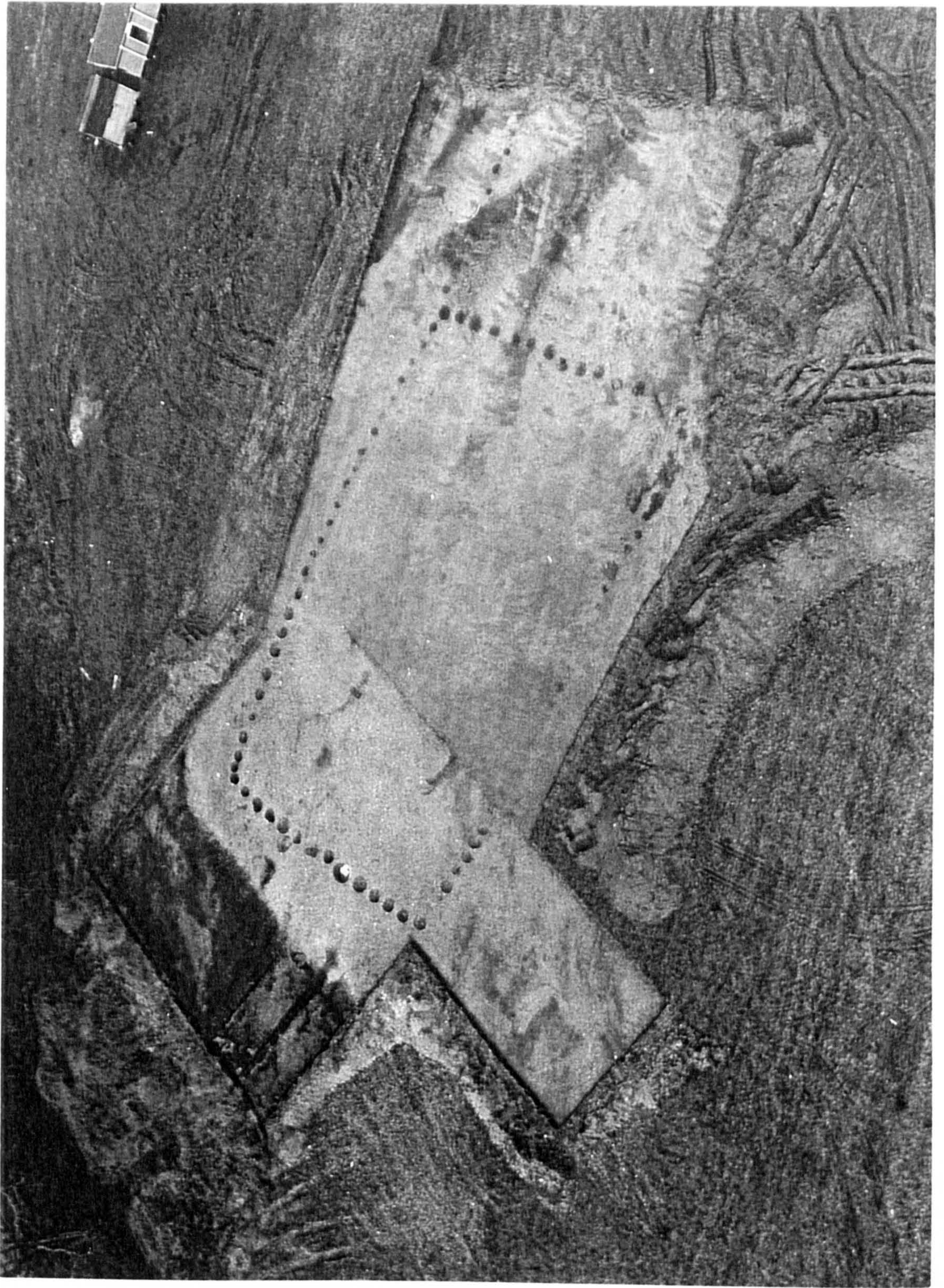


Plate 3.12 Douglasmuir being excavated in 1980 (© RCAHMS) .



Water, and Inchbare 2 is lost from visibility just a few tens of metres from the current course of this river.

Further pit-defined sites in Angus include a wide enclosure at **Woodhill**, east of Dundee, visible for over 100m, which is far wider than any pit-defined site which I have so far mentioned, at over 50m. It is orientated roughly south-west - north-east and only the rounded south-east terminal is visible. The only internal division is slightly curved also, giving the appearance of being a terminal of a smaller primary enclosure. It has irregular lateral pit lines, curving in where they meet the internal division, adding to this effect.

To the west of Dundee, near the village of Longforan, are another two cursus sites, one pit-, the other ditch-defined. The site at **Star Inn Farm** (also known as Greystanes Lodge) consists of two short parallel pit alignments, roughly 35m apart and visible for less than 100m. The alignments appear to be joined at one end by a curving terminal. There are two circular enclosures on the northern pit alignment and an oblong shaped enclosure within the *cursus* itself (fig. 3.16).

To the west is a possible ditch-defined cursus at **Carmichael Cottages**, recently discovered on old aerial photographic coverage. It consists of a pair of ditches, 300m long, 60m apart, with one straight terminal visible. Looking at aerial photographs of adjacent fields, the ditches appear to continue for some distance. There is a double lateral ditch at one point. Armit notes that “the site occupies a well defined natural plateau with a moderately steep drop around three sides” (1995, 97), a location shared by many cursus sites. Another possible *cursus* monument, **Loch of Liff**, was identified nearby earlier this year. It consists of a pair of parallel linear cropmarks running across a field. They bow outwards from one another along their length (plate 3.13).

One final pit-defined cursus in Angus, **Kinalty**, near Kirriemuir, by way of contrast, sits on slightly higher land (80m above sea level) with no nearby rivers. It is visible as a cropmark for almost 200m, defined by pit lines 30m apart, with a rounded southern terminal and one internal division (fig. 3.12). It runs across the



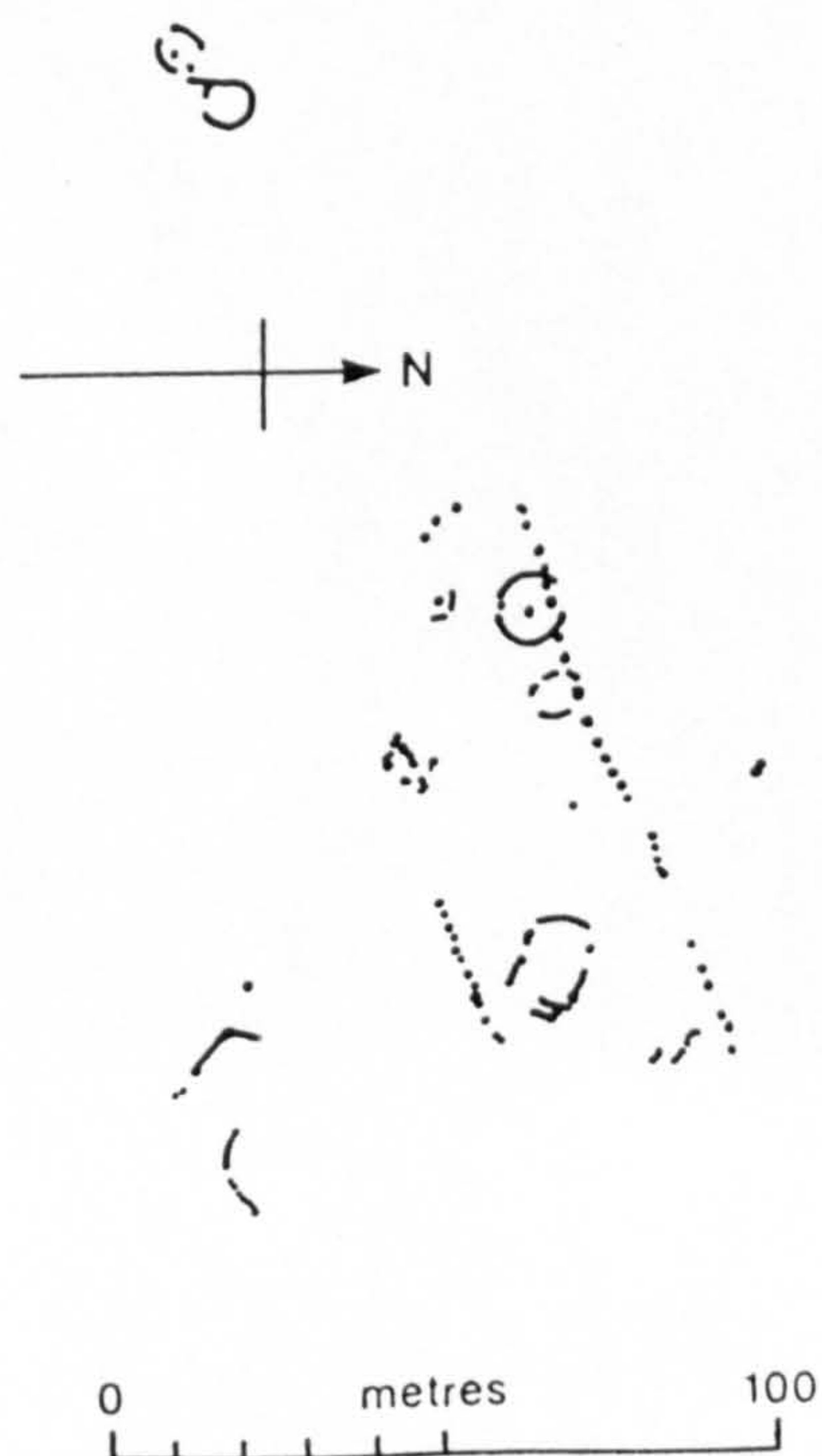
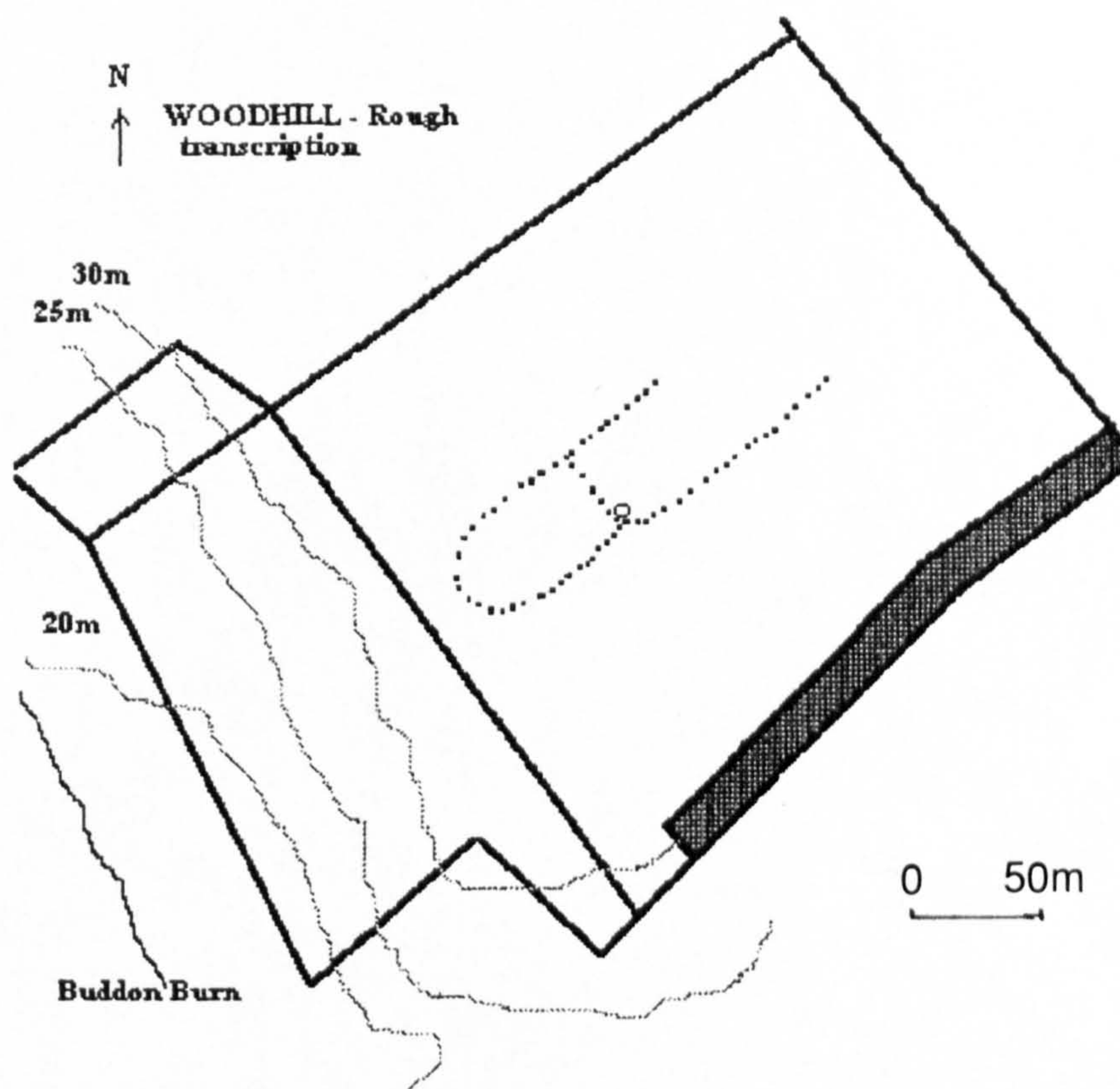


Figure 3.15 (top) Manual transcription of Woodhill cursus.

Figure 3.16 (bottom) Plan of Star Inn Farm, based on an RCAHMS transcription (from Brophy 1998a).





*Plate 3.13* The possible *cursus* at Loch of Liff. The parallel linear cropmarks run up the centre of the AP (© RCAHMS).



brow of a ridge ending at the top of a downward slope. A circular ditched enclosure lies just to the south, on the alignment of the eastern lateral pit line, and a few other pit features (enclosures and arcs) have been recorded in and around the *cursus*.

To the west of Montrose and the Montrose Basin lies a large cropmark complex, south of the village of Barnhead. It lies on a raised area in the centre of the valley of the South Esk, contained within an area defined by the 15m contour line. Cropmarks here include a large ditch defined *cursus*, square and round barrows, ring ditches, unenclosed settlement, a circular enclosure, and a very large rectangular enclosure (possibly a 19th century horse-racing track).

The *cursus*, known as **Old Montrose** (or Powis or Maryton), runs east-west across this raised plateau, terminating on the western edge of the plateau, looking up the valley. It is just over 600m long, 75m wide, and has one internal division near the western end. The western terminal is obscured by a circular enclosure overlapping it, but appears rounded. The eastern terminal is, however, straight but set at an angle. The *cursus* widens towards this end (fig. 3.6). A few breaks are visible along the ditches of this *cursus*. These include two or three along the western terminal ditch, a long stretch of the northern lateral ditch (where the *cursus* passes through a field that appears to show no cropmarks) and in the centre of the septal ditch. Whether these represent true 'causeways' cannot be properly established from aerial photography alone (see for instance Buckley 1988).

The relationship with the other cropmark sites is unclear. Several barrows and ring ditches lie within the line of the *cursus*, as does part of the overlapping later settlement enclosure. Excavations at other *cursus* sites have shown such barrows to be later than the *cursus* construction (Christie 1963; Reaney 1966). A scatter of flint tools, agate, and chalcedony flakes were discovered less than 1km to the south of the *cursus* (Sherriff 1981, 46) and a flint borer was found to the north-east (E. Stuart pers. comm.). Fieldwalking undertaken as part of this research is recounted in chapter 6. Certainly, there is much to suggest a long-lived activity in this area, possibly from the Mesolithic onwards.



A relationship with barrows has also been noted at **Blairhall** cursus (Loveday 1999), just north of Scone in Perthshire. There are fewer known *cursus* monuments in Perthshire and Kinross and the majority are ditch-defined, including Blairhall, which lies within a field full of cropmarks. The cursus itself is defined by a pair of narrow ditches 24m apart, and 190m long (RCAHMS 1994). Both terminals are visible to some extent and are straight, and there appears to be one internal division. Two ring ditches overlap the lateral ditches towards the eastern end of the cursus (plate 3.14). The cursus may have had two phases of construction, with the eastern half being wider and on a slightly different alignment.

At least five ring ditches, which have been identified as round burial mounds because they appear to have central pits (King 1992), lie in a line parallel to and less than 100m from the cursus. Further similar round enclosures lie within this same field, along with a series of confusing linear cropmarks. All lie on a low plateau cut to the north and east by a stream. The River Tay flows southwards 1.5km to the west.

To the south of Crieff two *cursus* monuments face each other across the River Earn. Both lie on terrace-edges above and overlooking the flood plain of the river. Two widely spaced parallel ditches running north - south and 80 to 100m apart define the northern of the two, **Broich**. It is visible for at least 450m, and perhaps up to 900m, running from the river terrace edge towards the town itself (fig. 3.17). No terminals are visible, although the terrace edge could be described as a topographical terminal.

The eastern ditch line was intersected by the edge of a large circular palisaded enclosure, about 100m in diameter, with a narrow bounding ditch near the edge of the river terrace. This presumably later settlement enclosure has been partially destroyed in the last few years by development. A small pit-circle lies within a gap in the western ditch and this ditch may also pass across the location of Crieff Barrow, now excavated and destroyed (Childe 1946). A standing stone was located about 100m west of the barrow and *cursus* west ditch.





Plate 3.14 Cropmarks of Blairhall cursus and surrounding features as photographed in 1992 (© RCAHMS).



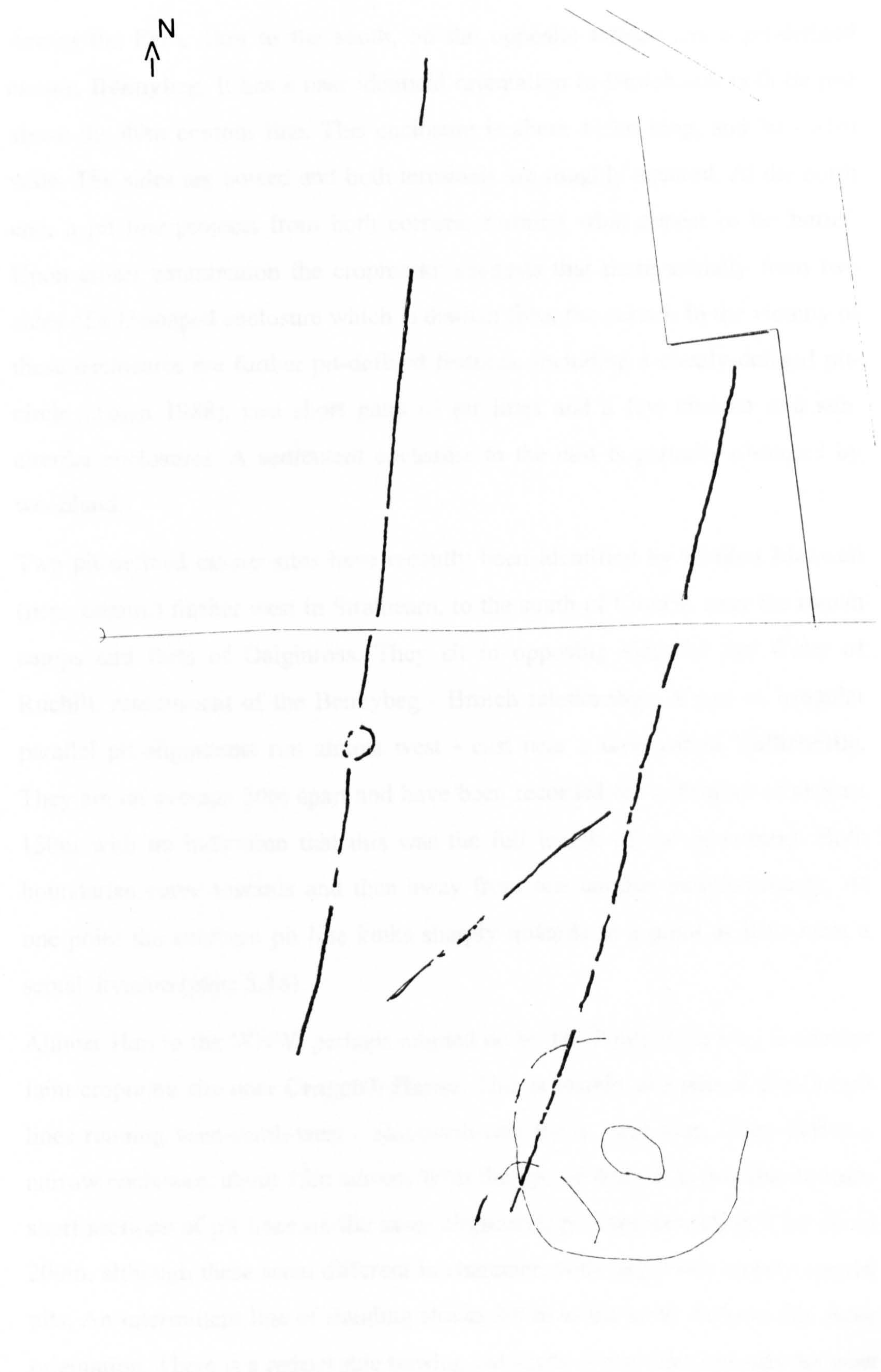


Figure 3.17 Plan of Broich at 1:2500 scale. Based on RCAHMS Transcriptions.



Across the Earn, 1km to the south, on the opposite terrace lies a pit-defined *cursus*, **Bennybeg**. It has a near identical orientation to Broich and both lie just above the 40m contour line. This enclosure is about 110m long, and 30 - 35m wide. The sides are bowed and both terminals are roughly squared. At the north end, a pit line projects from both corners, forming what appear to be 'horns'. Upon closer examination the cropmarks suggests that these actually form two sides of a U-shaped enclosure which is distinct from the *cursus*. In the vicinity of these enclosures are further pit-defined features, including a clearly-defined pit-circle (Tolan 1988), two short pairs of pit lines and a few circular and sub-circular enclosures. A settlement enclosure to the east is partially obscured by woodland.

Two pit-defined *cursus* sites have recently been identified by Gordon Maxwell (pers. comm.) further west in Strathearn, to the south of Comrie, near the roman camps and forts of Dalginross. They sit in opposing sides of the Water of Ruchill, reminiscent of the Bennybeg - Broich relationship. A pair of irregular parallel pit-alignments run almost west - east near a farm called **Tullichettle**. They are on average 30m apart and have been recorded for a distance of at least 150m with no indication that this was the full length of the monument. Both boundaries curve towards and then away from one another simultaneously. At one point the southern pit line kinks sharply inwards to a point as if to meet a septal division (plate 3.16).

Almost 1km to the WNW, perhaps aligned on by the Tullichettle site, is another faint cropmark site near **Craggish House**. This is visible as a pair of parallel pit lines running west-south-west - east-north-east for at least 80m. They define a narrow enclosure, about 15m across. With the eye of faith, it is possible to trace short sections of pit lines on the same alignment, perhaps extending it by up to 200m, although these seem different in character, with larger less closely spaced pits. An intermittent line of standing stones 200m to the south follows this same orientation. There is a remarkable bowing outwards of the sides towards the west end of the *cursus* for a short distance. A mark almost centrally placed here may be a pit.





Plate 3.15 The Cleaven Dyke. Note the irregular cropmarks of the ditches and the patchy central bank. The earthwork continues under woodland well beyond the top of the photograph (© RCAHMS).

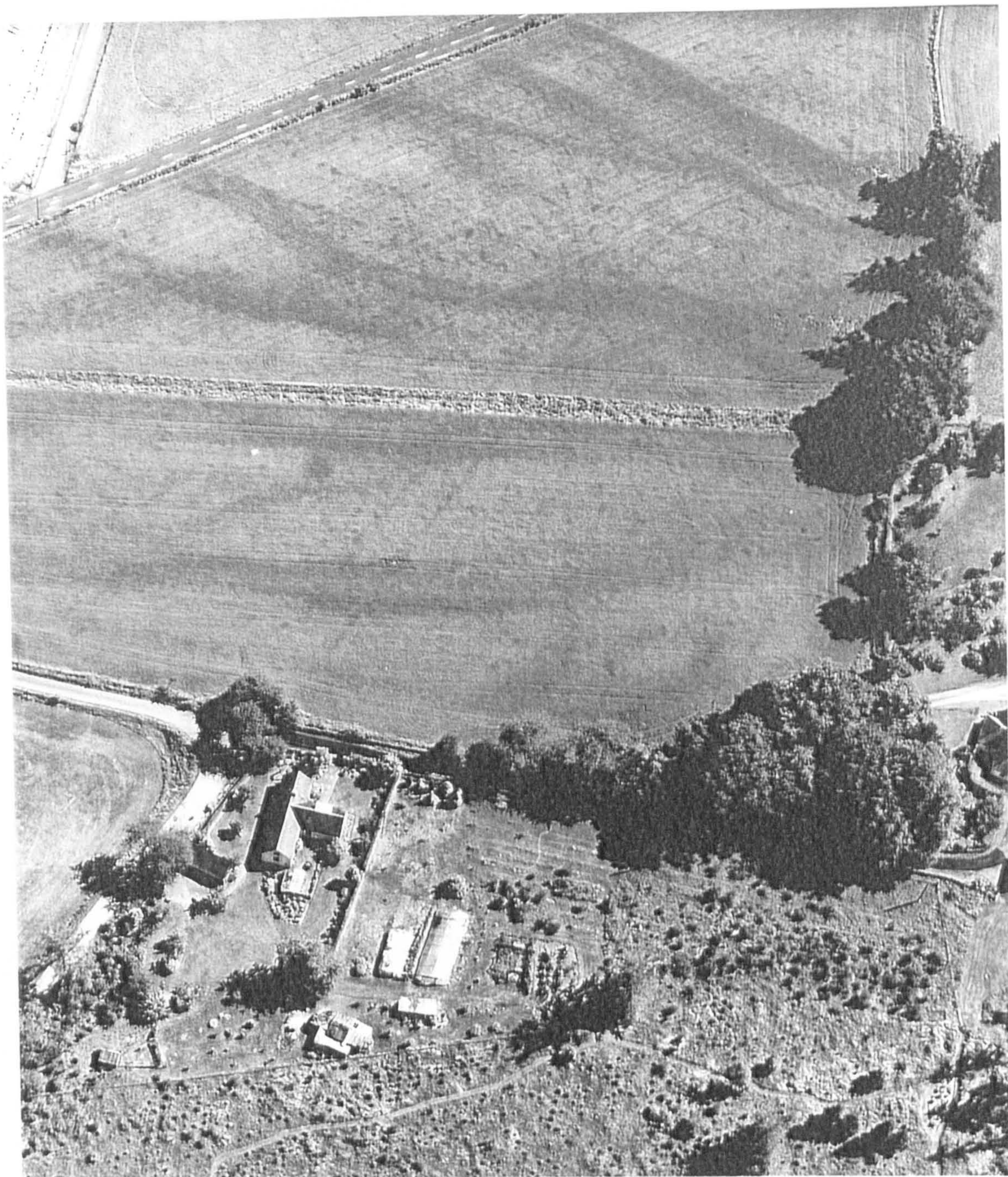


There are three sites in the immediate surroundings of Blairgowrie. One of these, **The Cleaven Dyke**, is still visible as an earthwork for 1.8km of its 2.1km length. It is unusual in that it consists of a single central mound within a pair of parallel ditches 45m apart (fig. 3.18, plate 3.15). The mound stands to a height of up to 2m in places running through woodland. The site is also unusual in the quantity of archaeological investigation undertaken here including excavations in 1901 (Abercromby *et al* 1902), 1939 (Richmond 1940) and 1976 (Adamson & Gallacher 1986). More recently, the Cleaven Dyke Project, running from 1993 to 1996, has included excavations, geophysical survey and a detailed contour survey (Barclay & Maxwell 1998, which aided this short description).

Recent excavation concentrated on looking at a cross-section of the monument and central mound, and the south-eastern cropmark section. A hearth beneath the mound produced radiocarbon dates with a calibrated range of 4750-4000 BC (*ibid.* xvii). The nature of the sample suggested that this date pre-dated mound construction by some 200-800 years. Several other probable pre-*cursus* features such a small pit and a post-hole were also located. The bank consisted of a low turf mound beneath material taken from the ditches with a final toeing of turf added on top. The long section showed that the bank consisted of segments (suspected from observation) and at least in this case the south-eastern lay up against the earlier north-western segment. Excavations along the cropmark section showed the ditch to be wide and relatively shallow with silt deposits. The south-eastern terminal appeared to 'die out' as it approached a topographic terminal (a natural knoll) with no clear parallel for the large oval mound at the opposite end.

The segmented nature and irregular appearance of the ditch was investigated by a contour survey undertaken in 1995-1996. This produced a very detailed contour plan of the monument and this, coupled with the excavations, helped to provide a fascinating biography for the site. The monument appeared to have been added to over an unknown period of time, starting from an oval mound and a subsequent long mound. The segments identified earlier characterised the earthwork as a whole, and these collectively formed five distinct sections, each with a clear and





*Plate 3.16* The recently discovered pit-defined cursus at Tullichettle running up the centre of the photograph. It is crossed by cropmarks of an old road or trackway (© RCAHMS) .



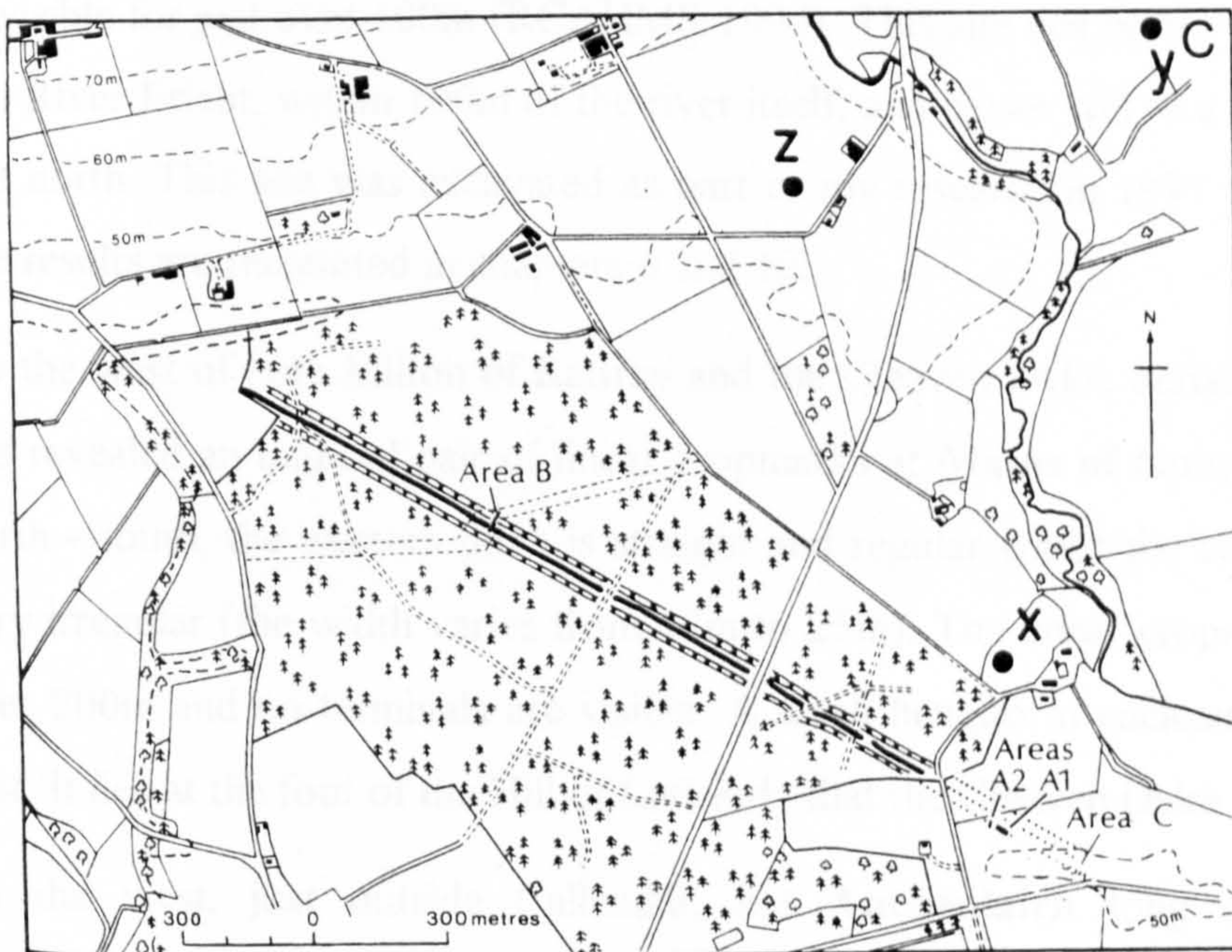


FIGURE 3. Map of the Cleaven Dyke, showing the location of the trenches. The three possible mortuary structures (RCAHMS 1994) are marked 'x' Littleour, 'y' Carsie Mains and 'z' Upper Gothens.

Figure 3.18 The Cleaven Dyke in plan. Areas A to C mark excavations by Barclay and Maxwell in 1993 and 1995 (from Barclay et al 1995, fig.3).



deliberate break between. These segments were added in a south-easterly direction. The last excavators concluded that this amazing site was a *cursus* / bank barrow (Barclay *et al* 1995).

Two further sites near the Cleaven Dyke deserve a brief mention, both of which provide further evidence of the varied nature of the *cursus* class in this area. To the north at **Milton of Rattray**, just outside Blairgowrie, lies a pair of parallel pit lines. The pits, in contrast to all other known pit-defined *cursus* monuments, are widely spaced (4m apart) and are set in opposing pairs, 18m apart. This alignment is visible for just over 100m (RCAHMS 1994). This site lies on the flood plain of the River Ericht, within 100m of the river itself, and closer still to a stream just to the north. This site was excavated as part of my research in 1997 and 1998 and the results are recounted in chapters 6 and 10.

To the west of both Milton of Rattray and the Cleaven Dyke, aerial photography has revealed an unusual pair of linear cropmarks at **Mains of Gourdie**. Running north - south, the western ditch is straight and regular whilst the eastern ditch is very irregular (the width varies from 12m to 25m). The linear cropmarks run for over 200m and no terminals are visible. A small hengiform enclosure lies to the east. It lies at the foot of the Hill of Lethendy that the Cleaven Dyke aligns on.

To the west, just outside Callendar, lies **Auchenlaich** long cairn that in morphological terms could be called a bank barrow. It was identified in 1991. This long cairn includes a trapezoidal chambered cairn and a long stony mound running from it, with an overall length of 342m. (It is no wider than 15m). There is also a suggestion of an extension on a slightly different alignment although this may be due to recent clearance activity. The chambered cairn has been heavily robbed and there is a lateral chamber 120m along the mound (Foster & Stevenson in Brophy 1998a, 106). This site has been included because of its remarkable length. It is the only megalithic monument in my *corpus*, and the only with any primary burial evidence.

The only site so far discovered in Fife lies in the cropmark rich north-east of the county, near the village of **Kilmany** (plate 3.17). It is a narrow ditch-defined enclosure, measuring 160m by less than 10m, with two rounded terminals and no



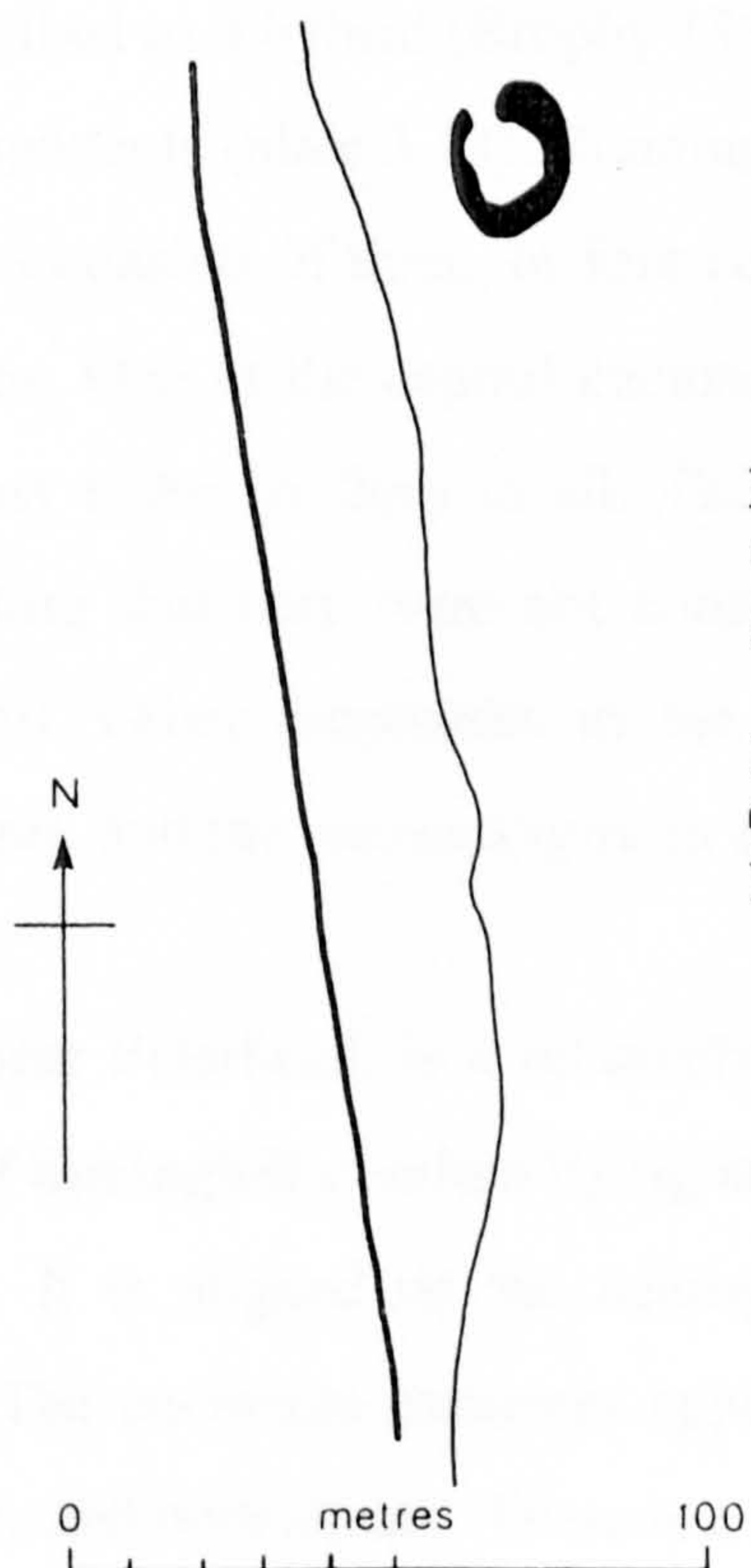
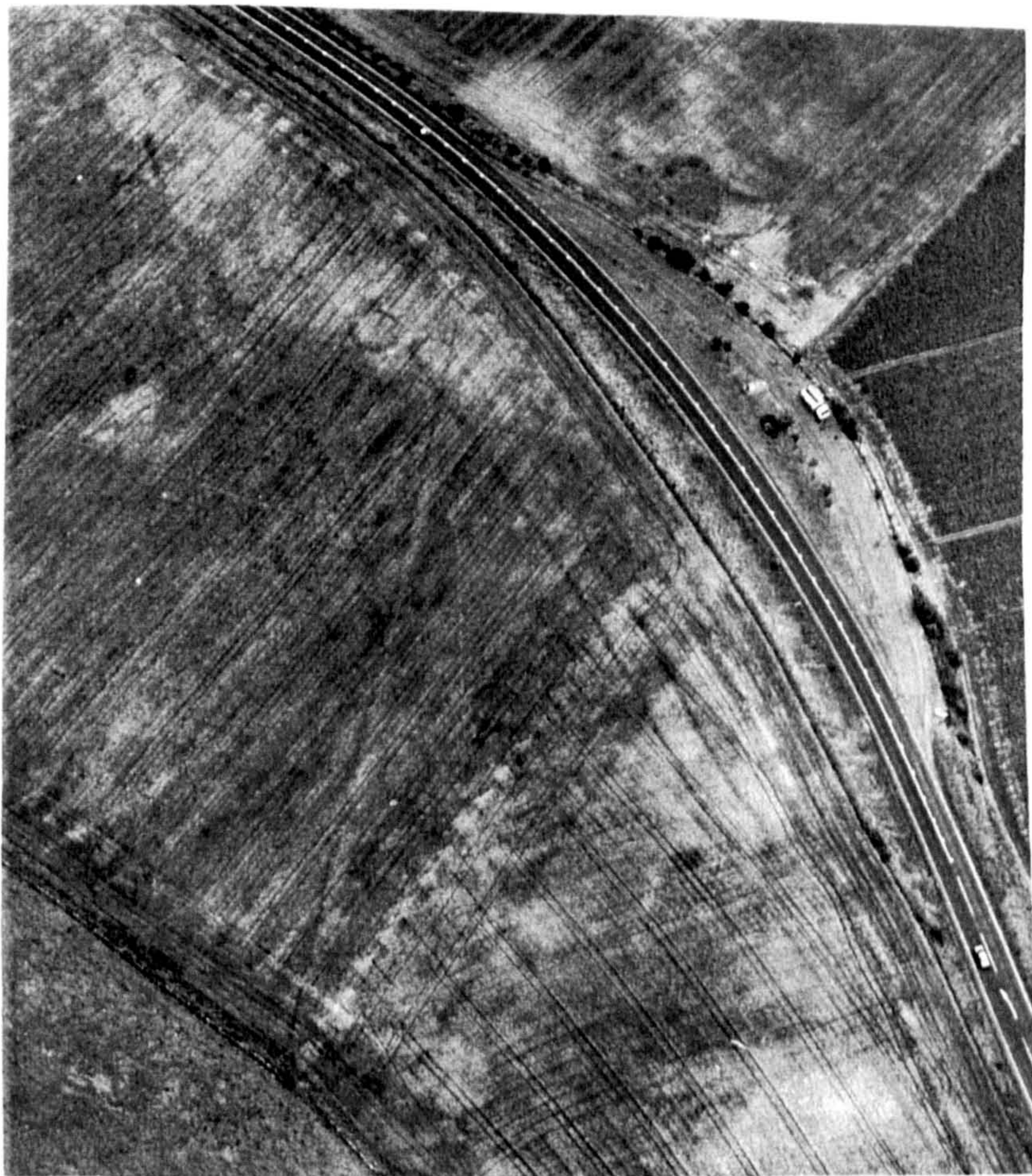


Plate 3.17 (above) The cropmark of the possible bank barrow site of Kilmany (© RCAHMS).

Figure 3.19 (left) Plan of Mains Of Gourdie and hengiform site, Based on RCAHMS Transcriptions (Brophy 1998a, illus.80).



apparent breaks in the boundary. In plan it is almost identical to the Blairbeth enclosure discussed above, and both could be classed as bank barrows because of their relatively narrow width (Brophy 1998a). The enclosure kinks towards the western terminal and a ring-ditch is visible just beyond the other end. It is located on a fairly flat section of the valley side, with a sharp downturn in topography in the western quarter of the site. It has good views along the valley of the Motray Water and seems to align on the gap between two hills to the west that the modern road passes through.

### 3.7. North-east Scotland

Aerial reconnaissance in north-east Scotland by the Aberdeenshire Archaeological Service has begun to produce a steady stream of *cursus* discoveries, including some of the most enigmatic cropmark sites in Scotland. The six known sites are all located on the coastal lowlands of Aberdeenshire and Moray, running from Lossiemouth to south of Aberdeen.

Perhaps the most enigmatic (and possibly unique) is **Mill of Fintray**, a site previously described as a hybrid (Brophy 1999b), because it combines ditch- and pit-defined components (plate 3.18). Running across a gravel terrace overlooking the River Don, it consists of three, or four compartments or enclosures and three internal divisions. One of the central enclosures is pit-defined, the rest ditch-. It measures at least 150m by 20m in all. The compartments are ill fitting at the corners suggesting that they were not constructed together (see also Shepherd and Greig 1996). Other cropmarks in the same field include pit-alignments, several enclosures, and the *cursus* aligns on a circular enclosure to the W.

To the north, near Peterhead, is a relatively small rectilinear ditched enclosure called **Mains of Springhill** overlain by rig and furrow (Aberdeen Archaeological Surveys 1977). It is aligned on the nearby Den of Boddam flint mines (see Saville 1994). The enclosure measures approximately 170m by 40m with both terminals visible and both square. There is a suggestion of one internal division.



To the south of Aberdeen lies **Purlicknowe**. Although this site is described in the NMRS as pit-defined, Shepherd and Greig (1996) have published a photograph suggesting that it is actually ditch-defined, consisting of a series of adjoining square enclosures. However, on other aerial photographs, it does appear to be a pair of closely spaced and parallel pit-alignments running for a distance of some 100m. There is less doubt, however, about the form of the ditch-defined site of **Muirton** (plate 3.20) in Morayshire. This narrow *cursus* / bank barrow appears to have no terminal ditches and so in effect must have stood as a pair of parallel ditches with perhaps a single central mound. There is a suggestion of cropmarks of a pit at either end, and it aligns on a circular enclosure just to the north.

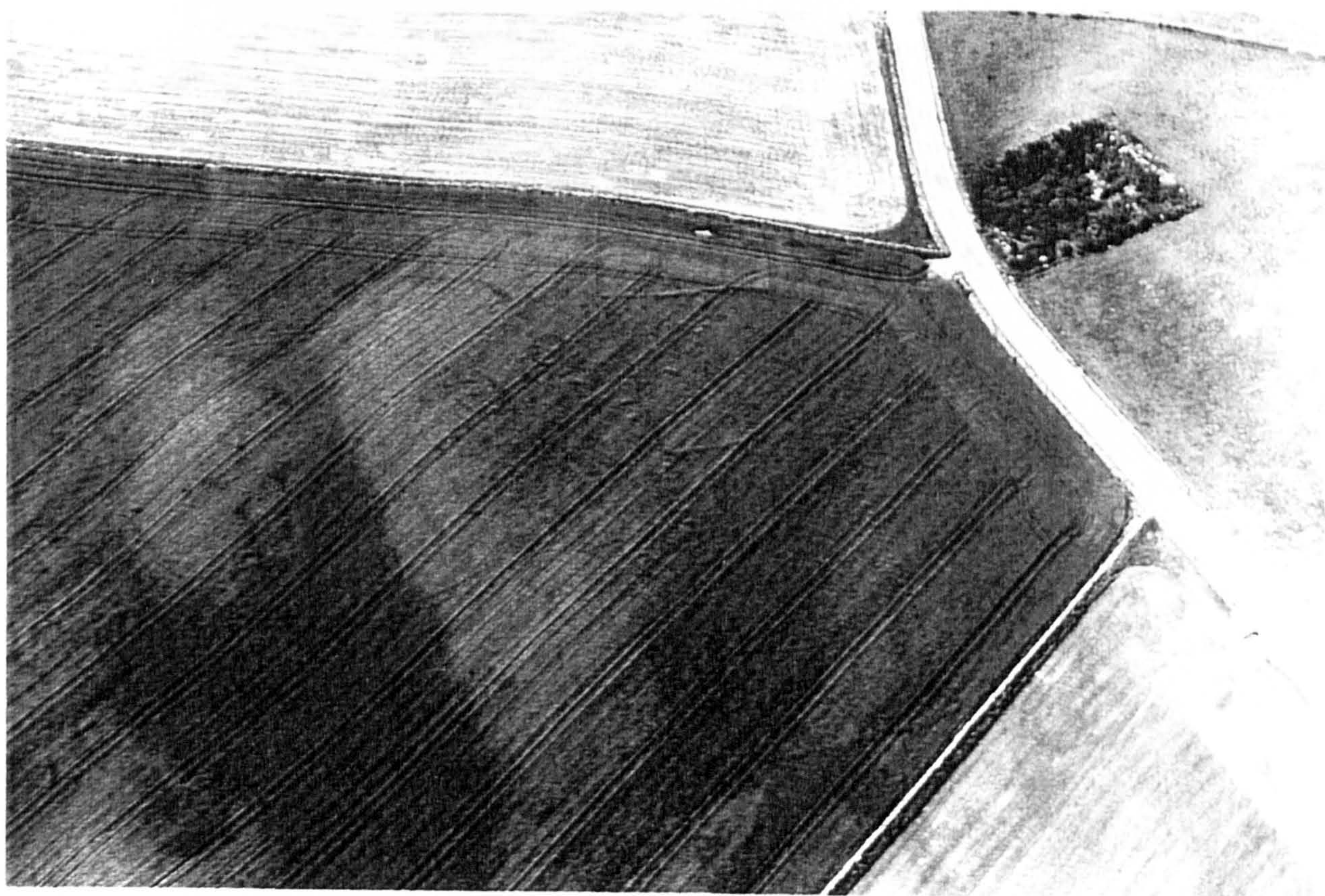


Plate 3.18 Mill of Fintray AP (© Aberdeenshire Archaeological Surveys)



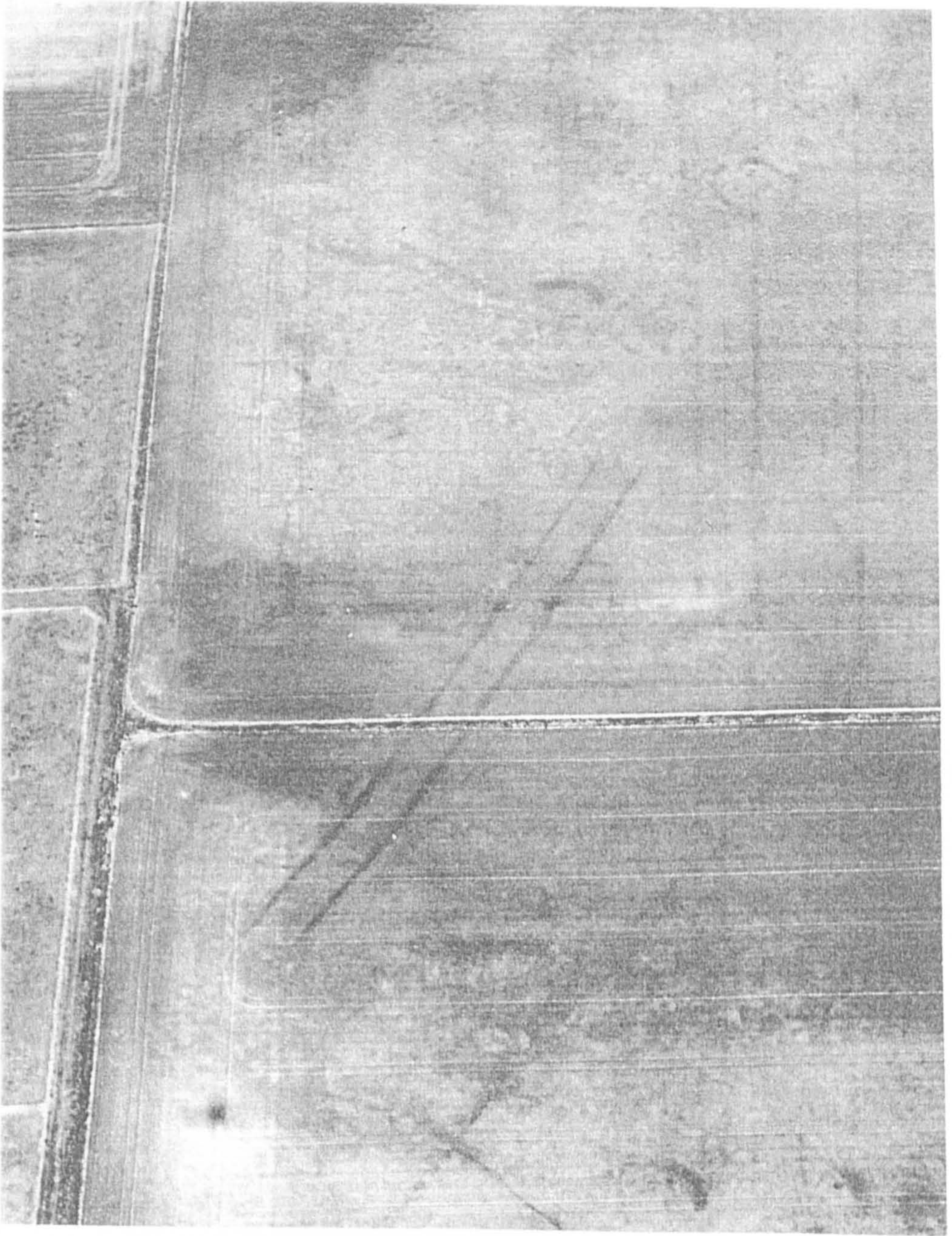


Plate 3.**19** Muirton



### 3.8. Discussion

This chapter has endeavoured to illustrate the wide variety of enclosures and pit settings that are classified as *cursus* monuments in Scotland. This eclectic record is now being mirrored in England with the recent discovery of two pit-defined sites (A. Gibson pers. comm.). I hope here not just to have illustrated the variety of sites in my study group, but also the ambiguity involved and the blurring with some of our other monument categories. This is best illustrated with sites like the Cleaven Dyke or Kilmany, and there is a kind of ease in which the discussion floats between bank barrows and *cursus* monuments, as if the two were interchangeable (suggested in fact by Bradley (1983) for Dorset's sites). The same applies for sites such as Inchbare 2, which seems to merely be a collection of pit-alignments, and the double ditches of Muirton which are a pair of ditches with no apparent physical connection.

What we have here is a set of ambiguous monuments. Mill of Fintray and the Cleaven Dyke are metaphors for the blurring of our labels and concepts which still somehow form a coherent class of monuments. Yet I hope that through my fieldwork and excavations (chapter 6), and later observations and interpretations, to show that the ambiguity of the sites themselves and how we deal with them is reflected in ambiguous meanings for these monuments. Things are not as clearly defined as they seem as the title of this chapter would suggest. This grouping of sites is a product of the present, imposed on the past. I will discuss the finer details of the topographical settings and architectural details of some of these sites in chapters 7 and 8. From this I hope to draw out some possible interpretations for these places, and also start to think about how we can move beyond the rather unhelpful catch-all term which *cursus* has become in Scotland.



## **4. The cursus story. Previous approaches to cursus monuments.**

### **4.1. Setting the scene**

The preceding chapters have outlined two aspects of the context of my research, that of the defining concept of the sites (cursus monument) and the sites themselves (*cursus* monuments). Here I would like to look at how archaeologists have approached cursus monuments since their initial 're-discovery' in the early 18th century by William Stukeley. The story of cursus interpretation, excavation and theory very much parallels the story of archaeology itself, from antiquarians to culture historians and from processualism to post-processualism, culminating in the late 1990's renaissance (Barclay & Harding 1999b; CEBAB and so).

Yet although cursus monuments, in one form or another, have been known to archaeologists for centuries, they are still amongst the least well-understood monument types. They are known to most archaeologists on a limited basis and not at all to the wider public. As popular as Stonehenge is the nearby cursus monuments are merely names on plans. Yet cursus monuments are as exciting and mysterious as Stonehenge. They are vast enclosures difficult to excavate and hard to visualise without complicated aerial photographic transcriptions, virtual reality or GIS. Most traditional and processual archaeologists have shown little variation in their ideas about the origins and functions of cursus sites, with excavations bereft of artefacts and providing wide dating ranges, and even long periods of construction. Perhaps more interpretative approaches (see for instance Tilley 1994; Brophy 1995, forthcoming a and b; Thomas 1999) are a more imaginative approach to the cursus phenomenon.

So in this chapter, I will look at how others have looked at cursus monuments (and for other detailed accounts see Hedges & Buckley 1981, Loveday 1985 and Brophy 1995). Each unfolding chapter of the cursus story sees a new approach, a new methodology, an innovation, each a product of its time....just as cursus monuments were (and are).



### 4.2. Antiquarians

In the beginning cursus monuments were Roman sites whether discovered in the chalk uplands of Wiltshire and Dorset or the banks of the River Tay in Perthshire. William Stukeley's sketches, his artistic representations of the monuments and landscapes he visited, include a depiction of the Stonehenge (Greater) cursus, viewed from the north (1740; see fig. 4.1). In the background is Stonehenge and a series of barrows. He drew this in 1723 when the cursus survived far better than it does today. His '*curfus*' runs in the foreground, from side to side, dividing the ancient ritual landscape in which it sits, caught as if photographed for the modern viewer. We look across it, not along its length, a direction of approach few archaeologists have suggested.

The form of the cursus suggested to Stukeley a Roman origin. He saw the cursus as a hippodrome, a *cursus* (literally a circus or Roman racecourse). He incorporated burial mounds into his interpretation. A now excavated round barrow, Winterbourne Stoke G.30 (Christie 1963), within the western terminal was a turning point for chariots. Elite spectators and judges stood or sat on top of a long barrow just beyond the eastern terminal. He reconstructs the scene: "A delightful prospect from this temple [Stonehenge], when the vast plain was crowded with chariots, horsemen and foot, attending these solemnities, with innumerable multitudes" (Stukeley 1740, 41). His sketches included a branch of avenue running from Stonehenge to the cursus. This was probably a figment of his imagination which physically joined the sites in a way they probably never actually were.

Sir Richard Colt Hoare discovered a second (and much smaller) cursus in the Stonehenge area (North 1996), but was also the first to publish details of the Dorset cursus, first recorded by William Cunnington in the early 19th Century (Atkinson 1955, 4). Colt Hoare, according to Stone (1947), saw the Dorset cursus as a 'racecourse' and maps recorded the cursus here as the 'British trackway' (Crawford 1935, 78). The Cleaven Dyke, as discussed in chapter 3, was another 18th century discovery, depicted idealistically in a map of the area



Prospect of the Curfus & Stonehenge from the North Aug 6 1723.

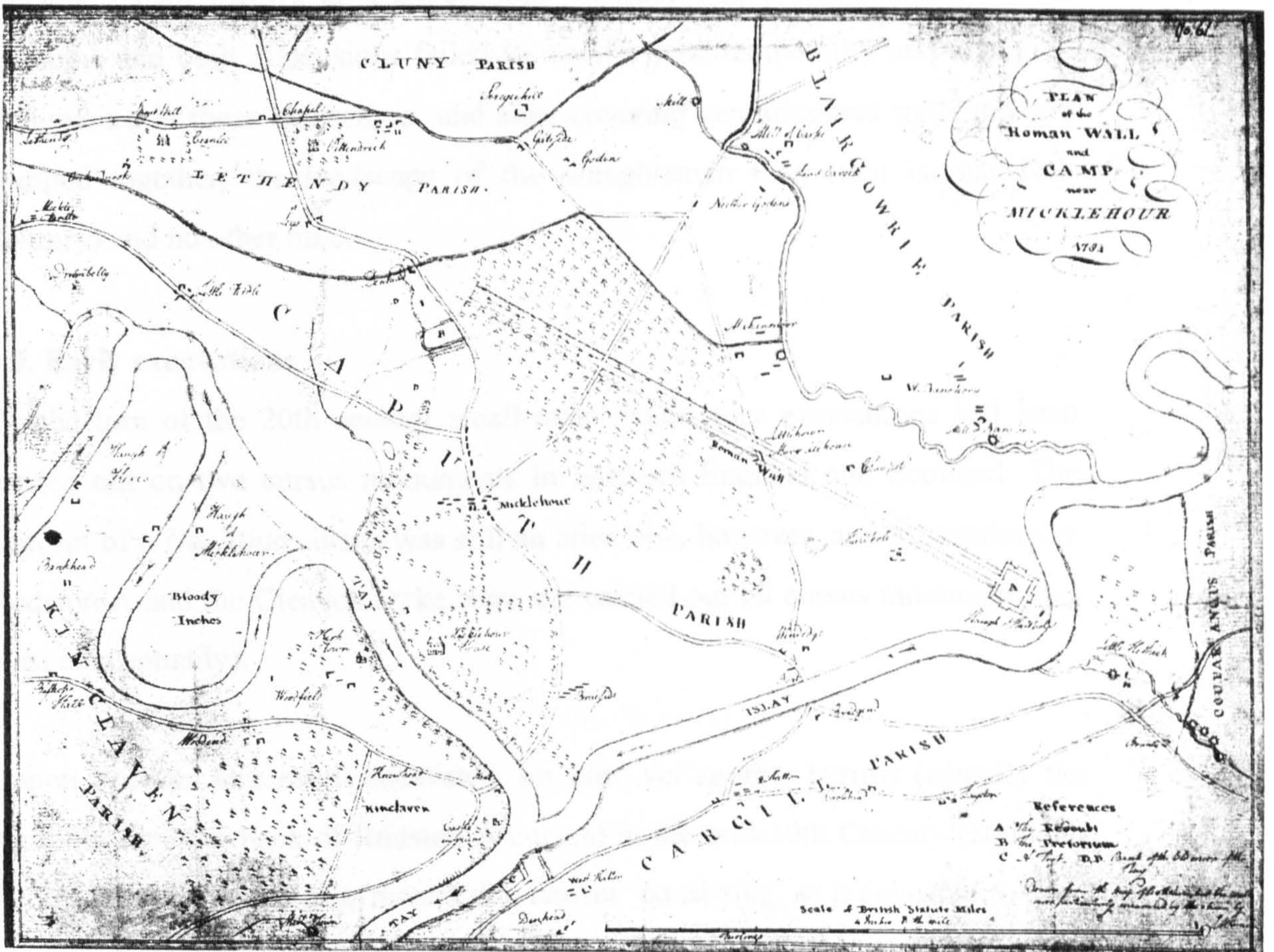
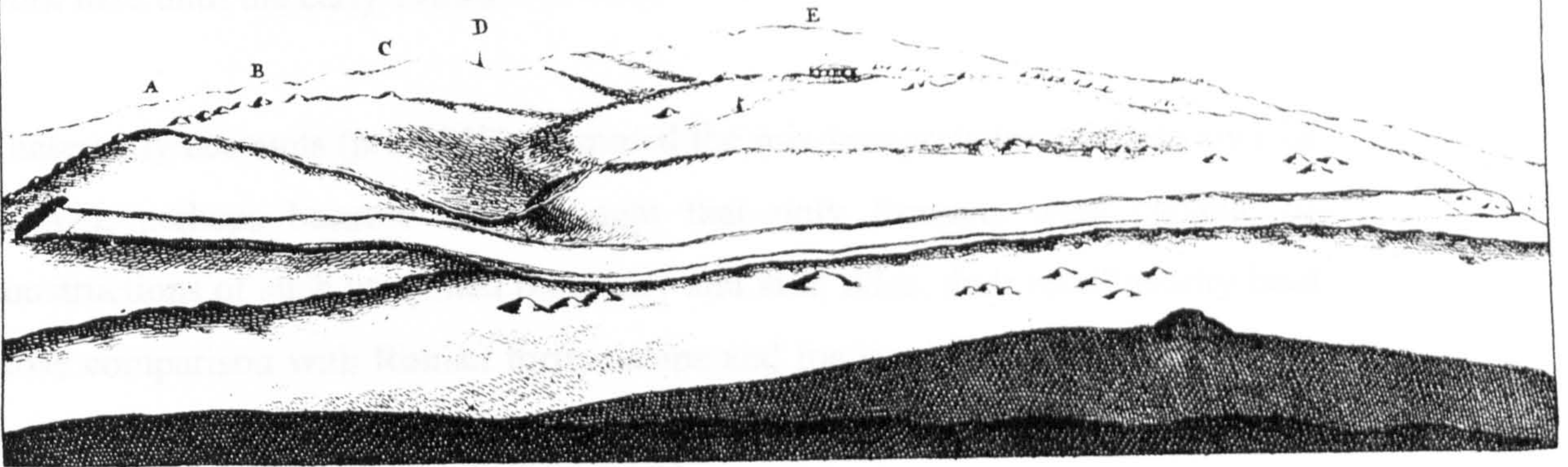


Figure 4.1 (top) Stukeley's depiction of Stonehenge Greater cursus published in 1740.

Figure 4.2 (bottom) McOmie's map of the Roman remains around Meikleour. Note the perfectly straight Cleaven Dyke ('Roman wall') (from McOmie 1784).



by McOmie (1784) as being perfectly straight, joining with a Roman camp at one end (fig. 4.2). The double assumptions of this site being Roman and of being longer (often substantially longer) than it was when initially recorded dogged all work here until the early 1980's.

These early accounts (pre-1850) promoted the mis-interpretation of these sites as Roman, perhaps because they thought that only Romans were capable of constructions of such presumed regularity and size. Also, their rectilinearity held close comparison with Roman forts, camps and roads, although not all sporting venues. Stukeley's drawings are aesthetically pleasing ways of observing prehistoric traces in their landscape, like a good water colour. By way of contrast, McOmie's plan betrays an engineer-like accuracy and perpendicularity. Both mediums and both dimensions failed to consider the temporality and changing architecture in these landscapes, and sites covering centuries and millennia are grouped together, the landscape of the draughtsman then (that is, the 18th Century) and no other time.

### 4.3. Early excavations

By the turn of the 20th century small-scale exploratory excavations had been carried out on two cursus monuments in northern England and Scotland. The concept of a *Neolithic* cursus was still an alien one, however, and excavations at Rudston A and the Cleaven Dyke were not carried out on cursus monuments (at least conceptually).

Canon William Greenwell excavated, for him, yet another barrow (actually the southern terminal bank of Rudston A cursus) in the mid-19th Century (Dymond 1966). He described it as a 'remarkable barrow' consisting, as it appeared to him, of two fairly long mounds, meeting end-to-end and forming a 'V'-shape (Greenwell 1877). In fact, this was a 'corner' of the cursus. He found a series of burials, most of which appeared secondary, alongside several pits and burnt deposits. He concluded that this was either a strange long barrow or two adjoined long barrows. Dymond (1966) notes that Greenwell should surely at least have



noticed the cursus ditch (still visible on the ground today) but no mention of this appears in his account. Not expecting any other outcome, he simply fitted the results of his dig into a preconceived theory (that it was a funny looking barrow) and went off to dig another hole in a more conventional looking one.

The excavations on the Cleaven Dyke, already discussed in a previous chapter, were part of a series of investigations in the area. The stylised, almost abstract, sections produced from the dissecting trenches again suggest the outcome followed preconceived lines, that the site was Roman (although this is never stated, only implied). Abercrombie's (*et al* 1902) insistence that the Cleaven Dyke formed a perfectly straight line (Barclay & Maxwell 1998) is obviously untrue when one actually takes the trouble to walk along the length of the site.

Both these sites are Neolithic *cursus* monuments or bank barrows, an observation easy to make in hindsight, admittedly not so easy to make when you have never actually considered such a thing even existed. Whilst Rudston was concluded to be Neolithic, its full extent was unknown. The Dyke was virtually fully visible, yet it was this very scale and visibility which meant it was thought to be Roman. Only through a combination of a technique which showed the extent of ploughed away sites, and excavations producing prehistoric dates, could the conceptual leap missing from these digs be made.

#### 4.4. Discovery and Debate

*"One hopes that Mr. Leeds' article will call attention to a class of objects which has hitherto been badly neglected, and a little judicious excavation at the right spot might, as Mr. Leeds suggests, lead to interesting results"* Crawford (1935, 78) in reply to Leeds (1934a).

A polite exchange of notes in the *Antiquaries Journal* in the 1930's, involving E.T. Leeds (1934a) and O.G.S. Crawford (1935) at last linked together some recent discoveries from aerial photography in the Upper Thames Valley with the known Wessex sites of Cranborne Chase and Salisbury Plain. Crawford referred



to aerial photographs of the latter that were published in *Wessex from the Air* (Crawford and Keiller 1928). They also put forward two new ideas, that cursus sites were prehistoric and they occurred outwith Wessex.

Leeds (1934a) described four sites discovered by air reconnaissance in the Upper Thames Valley area as being "mysterious lines and enclosures" (*ibid.* 414). By happy coincidence, one of the cursus sites photographed by Allen, Drayton - Sutton Courtenay was partially excavated by Leeds himself sometime after 1922. The mysterious ditch he discovered in a gravel-pit and partially sectioned now had a contextual whole. The ditch fills contained charcoal and worked flints, including fourteen scrapers (Leeds 1934b, 266). Crawford replied in the next edition, "....it may be suggested that the rectangular enclosures there described might possibly be connected with the so-called Stonehenge cursuses" (1935, 77). He suspected a prehistoric origin for the Wessex sites, the Stonehenge cursus monuments being amidst a series of barrows, and the Dorset cursus lying beneath an Iron Age settlement on Gussage Hill.

Over the next twenty five years, lists of an increasing number of cursus sites were published often including, interestingly, the long mound (or bank barrow) within Maiden Castle. Stone for instance noted six in all (1947). He also excavated small areas of Stonehenge Greater cursus, his section only a few metres wide, taking in the ditch, the bank, and a 'causeway' (purely by chance). No attempt was made to investigate the central area of the cursus (a feature of far too many cursus digs, including my own (Brophy 2000)). The ditch was seen in purely functional terms, a quarry to create a defining bank. However, flint knapping debris was evident on the ditch floor, and Stone concluded the ditch digging had a 'grooved-ware date' (1947).

R.J.C. Atkinson seems to have been intrigued by cursus sites. He undertook extensive excavations at Dorchester-on-Thames, a large cropmark complex including cursus, rectilinear enclosures, pit and post circles, and a henge (Atkinson *et al* 1951), and again the cursus was shown, through artefactual finds,



to be prehistoric (Abingdon culture, to be precise). A promised volume with a discussion on cursus monuments never appeared. However in 1955 he published the most detailed account yet of the Dorset cursus, including its relationship with long barrows around it, and possibly unintentionally illustrating the varied topography it crosses (discussed in great depth by Tilley (1994)). His published plan of the cursus and landscape includes Roman features, modern woodland, and major roads, a 2-D palimpsest.

The RCHM England published *A Matter of Time* in 1960, conveniently bringing together the discoveries and excavations of the previous quarter century. A list of fourteen sites was published, all in England. It also summarised briefly theories of what cursus monuments actually could have been for. The theme of linear movement dating back to Stukeley had been repeatedly proposed in cursus literature, whether for competitive or ritual motives. For instance, Stone on Stonehenge Greater cursus: "...some form of processional way..." (1947, 18), or Atkinson: "...it may be that Stukeley's interpretation of the Stonehenge cursus as a race-course was not...too wild a flight of fancy" (1955, 9). He argued for some form of processional ritual activity along the Dorset cursus. And so in *A Matter of Time* it was also felt that it was possible they were racecourses or processional ways. Additionally, two important themes were touched on (which I will return to in a later chapter in much more detail), a relationship with water, and segmented construction.

### 4.5. Data collection

*"All such theories...may be corrected by fuller excavation and discovery..."* (RCHME 1960, 26).

And it quite literally was a matter of time. The vast majority of cursus sites in Britain are situated on lowland river gravels, and under threat from gravel quarrying as well other developments. Hedges and Buckley (1981) compiled a list of the fifteen excavated cursus sites in England, and ten of these were rescue digs. Continued programmes of aerial reconnaissance were regularly discovering



new cropmark sites and St. Joseph equally regularly published these discoveries (1964, 1966). Importantly, he started to find cursus monuments outwith England - Sarn-y-Bryn-Caled in Wales (1980) and Douglasmuir (Kendrick 1995), Bennybeg (Darvill 1996) and Inchbare 1 (St. Joseph 1976) - although didn't identify any of the Scottish sites as *cursus* monuments.

The excavations tended to reflect their rescue nature, often only stripping small areas, investigating ditches and looking for banks. Occasionally, forays were made into the cursus interiors, with spectacular results - a timber circle in Springfield cursus terminal, Essex (Hedges & Buckley 1981; Buckley 1988); a single central mound at Scorton cursus, Yorkshire (Topping 1982). Whilst a whole wealth of statistical information was published - there was an obvious concentration of heights, depths, lengths and widths, as well as dating - still there was little new added to the discussion about just what cursus sites actually were for. Often, a report states that it was neither the time nor the place for such interpretation, or a bland ritual function was postulated.

Vatcher (1960), discussing excavations of Thornborough cursus, describes the site as 'ceremonial' and an 'avenue'. Rudston A, fully described and partially re-excavated by Dymond (1966) was concluded to be a 'ritual monument'. Other reports take the term cursus as a given, with no interpretation required (Wheeler (1970) at the so-called Findern cursus; Houlder (1968) for Llandegai cursus). It was seen as good enough to excavate the site and conclude that it was a cursus, whatever that means. This reached its logical conclusion with Topping's average, typical cursus (1982). This obsession with the size of cursus sites is partially because there is little else empirical left to say about them, because excavations have provided so few 'facts'. (This kind of vacuum lends itself well to typologies).

In their synthesis of all that had gone before, Hedges and Buckley (1981) can find little new for their short discussion on function (one page of twenty-one). Most conclusions reached still suggest a processional, ritual nature for cursus



sites, although finds such a flint knapping debris, burials (mostly secondary) and individual standing timbers or even the circle at Springfield suggested to them that it was perhaps not quite as clear cut or uniform as generally thought. From this position of ambiguity several different directions were taken which would be developed into the 1990's. Cursus monuments were linked to other monuments or to landscape features, and began to be fitted into typological schemes.

The ever widening geographical and morphological range of cursus sites, known in the early 1980's from the Cranborne Chase to Montrose, meant obviously that some control had to be placed on the *corpus* and artificial orders just had to be applied. Classifications were devised, both regional and architectural, at first to aid description and comparison but moving from classifications to typologies somewhere along the way. This was discussed in the case study in chapter 2 in far more detail.

### 4.6. The long mound tradition

As mentioned, monument studies have several 'Grand Themes' or *genres* (Tilley 1999, chapter 5), and one of these is what he calls 'the obsession with origins', cultural, geographic, architectural or a combination of these. Placing cursus monuments within a tradition of (recti)linear monuments has its origins in early lists of cursus sites which included a bank barrow (Stone 1947) or perhaps even Greenwell mistaking a long barrow with a cursus. The shared (recti)linearity of monuments and enclosures as diverse in size (and probably meaning) as long barrows, 'long mortuary enclosures', oblong ditch enclosures, houses, cursus monuments, bank barrows, fields, avenues, pit alignments and stone rows, have lead at various times to these being included in some form of comparative continuum. In general, three different approaches - with conceptual similarities - have been adopted to this range of sites. These can be summarised as 'evolutionary', 'interchangeability', and 'symbolism'.

The development of monumentality in Wessex as visualised by Renfrew (1973) saw the steady increase in monument size through time as a sign of increasing



order in society with more and more people brought together under fewer Chiefs to construct ever grander symbols of identity. Dorset cursus, he argued, was the temporal and communal pinnacle of this process. This idea was a product of a kind of 'bigger is best' assumption. Dating evidence contradicted this after only limited excavation (Bowden *et al* 1983). Nevertheless, cursus sites have been seen as the obvious final outcome of a 'long mound tradition', a gigantism which followed on from groups building ever bigger versions of 'long mortuary enclosures' and long barrows. Bank barrows have been defined merely as elongated long barrows (Ashbee 1970; Brophy 1998a).

Loveday (1985) moved from a merely the statistical continuum of rectilinear enclosures proposed a few years earlier (Loveday & Petchey 1982) to suggest cursus monuments had their origins in the mortuary enclosures often found beneath long barrows. Cursus sites could be seen as larger versions of the same thing, incorporating larger groups of people, dividing off massive ritualised spaces. Thomas added "the cursus monuments refer in their architecture to the long mound and long mortuary enclosure tradition" (1991, 32) which could be seen across Northern Europe (see Crawford 1938; Marsac *et al* 1982; Kinnes 1999).

Certainly, a close architectural similarity could be argued for cursus sites and long barrows. For instance, terminal banks seem to 'mimic' long barrows at Dorset, Stonehenge Greater and Rudston A cursus monuments (Barrett *et al* 1991). The Cleaven Dyke seems initially to have been an oval mound, then a bank barrow, and then a succession of long mounds were added on (Barclay & Maxwell 1998). Cropmark sites seem to incorporate earlier rectilinear enclosures, as at Dorchester-on-Thames (Bradley & Chambers 1988). However, a simple evolutionary scale, with bigger sites later, simply does not work when compared with the dating evidence available. Recently, Loveday himself has admitted that long mortuary enclosures are not uniformly earlier than cursus sites. Instead he postulates a 'conceptual' relationship (1999). The ambiguity of our monument



## Introduction

types has even lead Bradley (1983) and Barclay (in Kendrick 1995) to suggest that different, but similar, monuments were 'interchangeable'.

Loveday (1999) has suggested a more complex relationship of rectilinear forms. The rectilinear 'template' of the timber house structure and field boundary may find echo in a symbolic construction and merging of this presumed domesticity in a cursus monument. Twisting the notion of houses as a microcosm of society and its cosmology (Richards 1993; Parker Pearson & Richards 1994), here, cursus monuments become macrocosms of everyday life, ritual spaces for offerings to the gods. Recently, ideas of cursus sites involved in agriculture have become more common - cursus as formalisation of cattle droeways (Pryor 1988); cursus monuments and fields (Barclay & Hey 1999). That cursus sites were embroiled in the cycle of life and death embodied in the growing seasons seems paradoxical in that they are linear monuments, but as I will return to later, cursus monuments seemed to have embraced paradox.

Some of these approaches think afresh the role of these monuments in Neolithic life, as well as the relationships our *types* and the monuments in use may actually share. They suggest that things are more complicated than merely saying these sites are 'ritual' and involved linear movement, and these are important themes which I hope to develop throughout this thesis.

### 4.7. Archaeoastronomy

*"It is roughly parallel to the avenues at Merrivale, and I think, therefore, was, like them, used as a processional road, a via sacra, to watch the rising of the Pleiades"* Lockyer (1909) on the Dorset cursus.

Lockyer's archaeoastronomical interpretation of the Dorset cursus was the first of several attempts to explain this enormous earthwork in terms of the Heavens. Like most archaeoastronomical works they contain a germ of probability - that the movements of sun, moon and stars held some importance in prehistory. Yet they go on to explain things in terms of astronomical jargon, holding up all aspects of



archaeological sites to have the sole purpose of monitoring and recording the skies. In this post-processual time this down-playing of individuals and rigidity of function is unacceptable. I will, however, recount briefly these approaches to cursus sites with no sense of irony.

Penny and Wood (1973) identified six major alignment along the Dorset cursus, incorporating aspects of the cursus itself and some surrounding long barrows. They contended that the cursus was constructed to join a series of viewpoints from which significant points where the sun and moon met the horizon could best be seen. The cursus guided people to the correct spots, and the white (clean) banks guided vision. They felt that their discoveries had only a 6% likelihood of being purely coincidental. Their conclusions have been called into doubt and branded either inaccurate or irrelevant (Hedges and Buckley 1981; Loveday 1985; Barrett *et al.* 1991; Tilley 1994). How could such accuracy be gained along such an earthwork?

North (1996) considered the stellar alignments he saw as being embodied in the Dorset cursus. Different parts of the cursus were constructed at different times, according to stellar relationships with the horizons, and sightlines were taken from within the cursus ditch using the banks as an artificial horizon. Again, long barrows were used in this network of alignments.

Such specific and complex alignments which motivated and guided construction have been dismissed in more 'mainstream' archaeological work and instead a limited, almost secondary role given to solar or lunar alignments. Often these take the form of one general event (such as a solstice) which can viewed from within the cursus in a controllable form. It is exploited by the cursus builders (or designers) but is not the sole reason for building or planning the cursus. The mid-winter sun sets behind the Gussage North long barrow within the Dorset cursus for instance (Barrett *et al.* 1991; Tilley 1994; and see the cover of Bradley 1993). Bradley and Chambers (1988) have noted a change in 'ritual focus' around the Dorchester-on-Thames cursus, from alignments on solar events, to lunar



events. Loveday (1985) lists sites that have alignments which are in the general area of solstices (up to 7° out) and suggests a deliberate 'inexact' alignment on these sunrises, or even lunar arcs. More recently, Ruggles (in Barclay & Maxwell 1998) has investigated the Cleaven Dyke for any astronomical alignments, and found none of apparent significance.

### 4.8. Fringe theories

*"Stone rows, cursuses and avenues were probably all designed as monumental snakes"* Dames 1996, 92.

Cursus monuments are open to the interpretations of many, and these do not always conform to the archaeological mainstream. It surprises me that there are not more fringe cursus interpretations because of the enigmatic nature of these sites. At first hand I have witnessed a dowser at work on a *cursus*, in this case the Cleaven Dyke. He located a series of Neolithic houses beneath the central mound of the *cursus*, complete with 'bike sheds' and 'gunge boxes' using only a broken coat hanger and two pen shafts. He planned these with an engineers precision only for excavation to show none of it actually existed.

Measden (1992) suggested that cursus monuments were built as memorials to visits from the sky-gods, which came in the form of tornadoes. These cut through the natural woodland cover clearing a path that was formalised by cursus ditches. Still stranger is the theory that cursus sites represent snakes. Dames describes the Dorset cursus as "a well-known type of Neolithic earth serpent" (1996, 91). For him, the form is reminiscent in plan to a snake, as are the avenues in the Stonehenge area. They also recall to mind snake mounds in North America. These are primitive symbols, drawn from mythology and legend (including the Bible), and represent, amongst other things, nature, springtime, death and re-birth, hypnotism, and bisexuality. Such theories cast Neolithic people as druids or savages, worshipping sexual images (for aren't cursus sites simply enormous phalluses?) in a frenzied, crazy state.



### 4.9. Interpretative approaches

Earlier, I mentioned the strands of thought being developed in the study of cursus monuments in the 1980's. Buzz phrases like 'ritual landscape' became extremely fashionable amongst prehistorians, placing sites for so long de-contextualised by traditional inventories and monument type studies into their 'archaeological' context. (This is clearly demonstrated by a comparison of the RCAHMS inventories for *Lanarkshire* (1978a) and *East Dumfries-shire* (1997)). 'Ritual landscapes' evolved into 'monument complexes' and 'sacred geographies' (Harding & Lee 1987), terms more flexible and carrying less implications for the frequency of usage and the social function of these groups of sites.

The idea of 'landscape archaeology' was also re-born with the wider landscape situation of sites considered (Bender 1993). The advent of GIS and to a lesser extent virtual reality lead to new concepts entering the archaeologists' vocabulary, such as 'intervisibility' and sight lines. Ethnographic analogies and examples were used to highlight the involvement of the 'natural world' and 'nature' in the social, cultural life of people and groups. Concepts were also borrowed from 1970's human geography and were adapted by archaeologists to suggest that natural features were drawn into the monument's construction or became special named places themselves (see for example Bender 1992; Tilley 1994; Bradley 1991, 1993; Brophy 1995, and a more detailed discussion in chapter 7).

Whilst I will discuss the more theoretical of these concepts, phenomenology and hermeneutics, in the following chapter in much more depth it is important here to stress some of the developments post-processual archaeology has brought to the study of cursus monuments. Bradley has introduced new ways of thinking about monuments and has called for attention to be paid, not only within monumental boundaries, but also between monuments (in Bradley & Chambers 1988). Bradley has pointed out that cursus monuments were enduring earthworks that survived long after their initial construction (1993).



The relationship of the Dorset cursus with both the surrounding long barrows and the landscape is highlighted in Barrett, Bradley and Green's 1991 study of the Cranborne Chase. The long barrows are related to the cursus (and vice versa) by "incorporation, alignment and imitation" (*ibid.* 49). The landscape at certain points blocks views between cursus and long barrows - or highlights experience of monuments. The cursus 'crosses' two rivers, effecting processions. The *experience* of the cursus is considered from the perspective of a person on the ground - it would be more impressive from the terminals and was a monument to be viewed from within. High banks (possibly revetted) would have excluded external viewers. The close relationship with long barrows, visually, physically, and presumably conceptually, augmented the experience of the sites.

The cursus here is no longer a mere processional way but part of a network of meaningful places (in this case, burial sites). A degree of social control is suggested, with access controlled to the enclosure and the internal long barrows. There is also the suggestion that the cursus divides the landscape (*ibid.* 54). Interpretation here includes considering all sites (later in the volume the cursus is also related to Later Neolithic and Bronze Age sites), their chronological development, and the social roles the cursus may have encapsulated. The changing nature of the site through time is echoed by the changing focus of Dorchester-on-Thames, and yet the cursus has enduring importance (Bradley & Chambers 1988). I have undertaken a similar reconstruction of a complex of cursus sites around Holywood village, Dumfries (see chapter 6).

A more general social function has been put forward for cursus monuments by Harding (1999) who suggests that we should not simply concentrate on the rituals which took place within cursus sites but concentrate on the world outwith them. He ties cursus monuments in with the perceived movement from collective to individual burials identified in the second half of the fourth millennium BC (Barrett 1994). This fits well with dates for many English cursus sites, which fall into the period 3600 - 3100 BC (Harding 1999). Cursus monuments represented a wider scale control over the landscape, dividing up large areas of river terraces, a



larger scale version of the boundary around causewayed enclosures or burial mounds. He suggests that this represents a move towards fewer leaders, exercising more control over groups and the landscape. Regional lowland grouping of cursus sites (such as North Yorkshire, Upper Thames Valley or Wessex) illustrated this major change occurring in Neolithic society.

### 4.10. Discussion

*"Everything  
is connected  
in life  
the point is to  
know it and to  
understand it"*

Gillian Wearing, from her exhibition entitled 'Signs that say what you want them to say and not signs that say what someone else wants you to say' 1992-3.

The potential for cursus monuments to reveal things about the people who built or used them is limited. So far, many cursus sites have been excavated, and still more have been photographed, transcribed, turned into plans, and given a name. If we are to start to meaningfully 'solve' the 'cursus problem', I believe that we have to take the route of the recent interpretative approaches. We should consider the merits of the analogy of cursus as text, and to understand that one reading will just not do. Cursus monuments seem dead to us now, abandoned to collapse, crushed under the plough. They seem so old, and the people that witnessed their boom periods are similarly under the ground (or in boxes in museums). What can I (or you) hope to say about these sites which hasn't already been said in the form of specialist reports, pie-charts, histograms, scale drawings and catalogues of finds?



Cursus monuments offer a challenge to us because they are so big, so obvious, yet they allude our understanding. We must imaginatively approach them not as dead monuments but as monuments of the dead. We must consider the route they follow (or led) not on the contour plan, but on the contours of the land. An approach only touched on, Tilley's phenomenological fieldwork (1994), is the way forward for me, and will be outlined in detail in the next chapter. We have to experience the sites in the modern landscape yet we cannot discount these experiences. If we approach them with assumptions (and how can we not), we must acknowledge these assumptions. This is part of a hermeneutic circle that we must enter.

Some other recent ideas have also been more promising. They consider the close relationship cursus sites form with water and the landscape and other recurring themes which run through centuries of cursus study - linearity, a connection and similarity with mortuary structures and rituals, why they produce so few artifacts, and the segmented or gradual nature of their construction.

We cannot allow ourselves to see what we want to see - processions - nor can we accept that we will get one solution. I have the luxury of space and time to outline the polysemy cursus sites embody. The 'cursus problem' has more than one solution, perhaps many - and these are only my readings, my suggestions. Cursus monuments can mean everything or nothing, depending on who you are and what you know.



**PART 2. THEORY AND FIELDWORK (PHENOMENOLOGY)**



## 5. Phenomenology and archaeology

"Among the many certainties whose lack he complained of, one alone is present, and it is that all things appear to us as they appear to us, and it is impossible for them to appear otherwise" (Eco 1996, 65).

### 5.1. My interpretative framework

The opening four chapters have outlined the contextual whole within which my research has its origins. I have outlined the way in which a certain group of sites have been classified together and I have also discussed the various approaches which archaeologists have taken to study them after classifying them. Before going on to look at my fieldwork and the experiences I have had at some of these prehistoric places, it is important to set out the genesis of my phenomenological approach. Through looking at other archaeological phenomenologies, I hope to develop my position at the point of entering the field.

Perhaps the most original approach to cursus monuments in recent years was recounted by Chris Tilley (1994) in his book *Phenomenology of Landscape*. It was an early appearance of what has become one of the defining theoretical / philosophical strands in interpretative archaeology in the second half of the 1990's (see for instance, Thomas (1996a), *Archaeological Dialogues* volume 3.1, Karlsson (1997, 1998), Brophy (1995, 1998b), Tilley (1999; in Bender 1998) and Topping (1997)). This is following trends set by other social sciences.

I was inspired by my first reading of *Phenomenology of the Landscape* whilst working on my undergraduate dissertation, and set about walking back and forth through *cursus* crop mark sites across Scotland. But this initial set of experiences was undertaken with no real understanding of phenomenology - I simply had a (vague) concept of 'experiencing the landscape' in my mind. Perhaps this is enough and no serious understanding of phenomenology is required to undertake a phenomenological approach in archaeology (I am an archaeologist, not a philosopher). However, I was driven to have a better idea of what I was doing



when experiencing cursus monuments, to define the possibilities (and the limitations) of such an approach. This research is in part a response to, and critique of, my earlier work (Brophy 1995).

This chapter has several purposes both as a concept and a project. Firstly, it has been a personal quest to try to understand phenomenology and its use in archaeology. Secondly, I want to introduce and ground parts of my research, in terms of fieldwork undertaken at *cursus* monuments, and much of my discussion. Finally, it is an opportunity to work through some of philosophy of French existentialist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose ideas of ambiguity and the *lived world* are helpful for me in thinking about how we experience material culture and the world. I want to work towards what Thomas (1993) describes as an 'historical phenomenology', an 'imaginative archaeology', although not entirely in the way he worked towards this goal (1996a). An imaginative approach to cursus monuments is required, just as it is in many other areas of archaeological research, not simply to define what these enclosures were or did, but how they functioned as a part of society and the landscape.

### 5.2 What is phenomenology?

Although there have been several different schools of modern phenomenological thought, originating from the work of Edmund Husserl, all maintain a basic core aim - "the description of things as one experiences them, or of one's experience of things" (Hammond *et al* 1991, 1). At its most literal level, phenomenology is the study of phenomena. It has become a way of not only considering the experience of things around us, but also thinking about what this tells us about the experiencing subject. Usually, there is a concern with stripping things down to their *essences*, to the bare essentials, to locate meaning in the subject-object relationship, how people interact with the world around them. More ontological strands are concerned with revealing the self or structures of the self through the way in which the self experiences all non-selves (objects).

•



A recent and excellent archaeological glossary (a much needed aid for the reader these days) has this to say of phenomenology. A “phenomenological interest is one in people’s lived experience, a unity of subject and object worlds with the subjective being the form that the objective world takes” (Hodder *et al* 1995, 240-1). These are very much the concerns of my research (see chapter 1) - people experiencing the world because they are involved in it and a fusion of subject and object at the point of experience.

Phenomenology plays on the various meanings of the word experience. It is the description of *our experiences* and the things experienced. The concept of describing things, through various different forms of perception and experience, is not simply restricted to physical objects (a chair, a river), but also to concepts, beliefs, symbols, social structures, relationships, memories, feelings, time and actions. Whilst Husserl used the experiences of chairs and dice to begin to formulate the structures of consciousness, Heidegger later reached the concept of *Dasein* through a phenomenology of Being, and Ricoeur attempted a phenomenology of language. Both geographers and archaeologists have attempted a phenomenology of landscape, considering human experiences of, and relationships with, the landscape (Nogué i Font 1993; Tilley 1994). I will return to these in more depth later (section 5.7).

It is also the account of *how we experience*, usually through sensory perception. The role of the senses in how we act in the world (and perceive the world) is increasingly referred to in recent archaeological literature, partly as a critique of our concentration on visual and aural experiences (Watson & Keating 1999; Brophy & MacGregor forthcoming), and Merleau-Ponty in particular stresses the role of all senses in the lived world.

Finally, our experiences in the present are shaped partially by our *previous experience* in life and in archaeology.



Relph (1981) identified three different 'types' of phenomenology. Firstly, the phenomenology of philosophers, steeped in complex and obscure language (Wartofsky 1977, 304), a radical branch of philosophy attempting to gain a deeper understanding of oneself through thinking about experience and explicating the structures of consciousness, Ego and Being. Secondly, Relph notes the role of phenomenology as giving a new outlook on life, a kind of 'religious experience' in which we can gain a deeper understanding of our relationships with people, places, things and events around us, encountering them as part of a dynamic relationship and so having more care and concern for them. This aspect of *care* in Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-World has led to its application within ecological movements (Thomas 1996a), and Steiner (1992) describes the driving influence of 'astonishment' in Heidegger's discovery of Being.

The third 'type' of phenomenology Relph describes is academic, but non-philosophical, in that it is practised by various disciplines, especially within the social sciences (alongside novelists and painters). Phenomenological approaches have been adopted in anthropology, sociology, geography and psychology for example. It is seen as one way of interpreting human experiences and actions amongst several, including Marxism, Structuralism, Post-structuralism and hermeneutics.

### 5.3. Why phenomenology?

Isn't this just another case of 'intellectual potlatching' (Johnsen & Olsen 1992, 420), where archaeologists apply uncritically the theories of a wide range of philosophers? The more cynical may suggest that this chapter represents an example of a theoretical archaeologist picking on an individual philosopher, or school of philosophical thought, seemingly very fashionable in the past decade. David van Reybrouck recently commented of this trend, "it seemed sometimes that a post-processual career could be built on an intense reading, superficial or subtle, of one single and yet undiscovered author, followed by a number of publications which underline the archaeological relevance of his *oeuvre*, in order



to have your name associated with a chosen thinker" (1996, 2). I prefer to believe that these are genuine attempts to break free of traditional archaeological thought, to think about individuals as well as society, and to acknowledge that we cannot study the past without consideration of our present context.

The problems I am concerned with - the meaning of cursus monuments, why they were built, why they were built where they are, what we can tell about the builders and subsequent generations - have not and cannot be adequately approached by a simple empiricist methodology, descriptive and bland. Just excavating a cursus is not enough, although still forms an important part of my interpretations. I want to try to get closer to the meaning of cursus sites and previous archaeological applications of phenomenology have shown the potential of such approaches. The full potential of this way of archaeological thinking has still not been realised.

Relp suggests that phenomenology has great significance for the social sciences due to the fact that "it accepts the complexities and meanings of human experience, phenomenology is especially appropriate for studying how individuals relate to each other or their environments..." (1981, 103). This resonates with the striving of Barrett (1988, 1994) for an archaeology which gives prevalence to human agency. Phenomenology is very much concerned with the individual, but more importantly, how they relate to one another and the world. In particular, Merleau-Ponty stresses the role of the world in which people live, not some abstract intellectual construct, or an unimportant backdrop. The dialectical relationship which begins and works through the point of interaction with the world (by acting and perceiving) is vitally important.

Phenomenology is more than a mindset, a methodology or a framework. Like *being* an archaeologist it is a way of living in the world. We cannot be detached observers because we are intimately engaged in bringing the past into being, so therefore phenomenology has a role in us reflecting upon our being-in-the-world-as-archaeologists. So the value of phenomenology here is to remind us of our



place in the world, and that we must become involved in the archaeological traces of the past, just as we are involved in the world.

I have also found phenomenology to be a good starting point for questioning the assumptions that underlie archaeological endeavour, even to bring us to question the nature of archaeology. To think about what we are doing is to begin to look beneath the surface of our assumptions, what we take for granted, including our unquestioned methodologies and objectives. We realise that we are lost-in-coping-as-archaeologists (as Heidegger would have put it (Thomas 1996a)), on auto-pilot, doing the things we have always done and are comfortable doing. But what are we writing and trying to do? What are we thinking? What exactly are the questions we are asking as archaeologists, and what do we expect in the answers? To a certain extent an awareness of phenomenology helps us remember that as archaeologists we are striving to reach some form of understanding of the material remains of the past.

Our interaction with these material remains which are all around us cause us to face the unpalatable truth that we are left only with eroded, ploughed down, sedimented, corroded, burnt, leached remnants of the past. What status do our interpretation of these traces have? And does their temporality belong in the past or the present (Shanks & Tilley 1987)? Are our discussions of field monuments, artefacts and excavations merely stories spun by our subjective viewpoint? Or are they actual descriptions of the past reconstructed from the facts? Are they merely possibilities, simply descriptions of experiences of the past in the present?

Finally, phenomenology demands that we reflect on what we bring to the archaeological work we undertake, because we are the experiencing subject, and the interpretations we give are shaped both by the physicality of what we are investigating and our preconceptions, motivations, objectives and previous experiences. Through this we can begin to think about the hermeneutic that is archaeology and start to re-think our field work and excavation methods and reports, and even how we think about places and material culture of the past.



The experiencing subject and the experienced object (and the resolution of this dichotomy) is a theme of phenomenologies (and dealt with differently by different philosophers and archaeologists), and a theme of this thesis (chapter 1). It allows us to close the distance between ourselves and the archaeology, but comes with the responsibility of describing what we see as honestly as we can. We can neither ignore the subjective event, nor can we deny what we have experienced. These themes will be carried forward in more detail in the discussion on Merleau-Ponty's dialectical phenomenological description below.

### 5.4 Transcendental phenomenology

The originator of modern phenomenology, the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, formulated his distinctive and thorough description of human consciousness and experience in the first half of this century. It is important to briefly outline some of the major concepts in his influential books *Cartesian Meditations* (1977) and *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970), partially because they form a point of critique for so many later phenomenologists but also because they do still influence some current archaeological thought (Karlsson 1998). Much of the discussion of his philosophy is indebted to Hammond *et al* 1991, chapters 1 to 3.

Husserl wanted to describe human experience and from this he hoped to eventually reach the transcendental Ego, the consciousness, distinct from the empirical ego (the scientific brain). He wanted to describe things without prejudice, and to do this he attempted to establish philosophy as a pure science, based on subjectivity as opposed to the empirical sciences, which claimed objectivity and were based on assumptions, prejudice and unfounded suppositions. Husserl wanted to establish, as did Descartes, what we could be sure of and, from this basis, begin to analyse the consciousness. His starting point was to suggest that Descartes had confused the transcendental Ego and empirical ego (Silverman 1987).



Husserl concluded that he should suspend judgement on the existence of everything one could not be sure of (a process called the *époché*). He figured that the only thing we could be sure of was whatever performed this *époché* (the consciousness of the subject) and the actual process of suspending judgement (the thoughts of that consciousness). From this point, he introduced the process of 'intentional analysis' involving a description of both the experienced object and the experience itself. Husserl believed that all thoughts were intentional, that is, directed towards something. "Acts of consciousness 'point beyond' themselves, intend or mean objects, and objects 'point beyond' themselves to the acts of consciousness which intend or mean them " (Hammond *et al* 1991, 49).

Husserl sets out his concept of phenomenological description as part of the process of intentional analysis, based on a theme (the experience to be studied). Phenomenological description involves both the experienced object and the experience. This involves not only the description of the actual event but *all* possible perceptions that could be had of that object, both spatially and temporally. Implicit experiences, those from different viewpoints and ranges, different times, and those of the different senses, are always present and Husserl called them the horizons of experience.

The result of this bracketing off of the world outwith the Ego leads to the concept of a transcendental Ego which Husserl believes rises above all experiences - "all experience, all knowledge, is seen as flowing from the transcendental Ego" (Hammond *et al* 1991, 84). It is at this point that Husserl really departs from later phenomenologies. He believed that through study of the structures of this Ego the world could be given meaning, and become understandable. "The full....description of the transcendental Ego, with all its experiential content, yields the concrete universe" (*ibid.* 87).

This is a philosophical academic type of phenomenology (Relph 1981), more ontological and in-depth than is perhaps required within the social sciences. Thomas agrees - "the great drawback of any such approach is that it is almost



invariably geared towards the disclosure of some fundamental and primordial human consciousness. To the archaeologist, such a proposition may be both theoretically unsound and unnecessary as a desired goal" (1993, 74). It simply goes too far, and has aims above those of (or of no real concern to) the archaeologist. Wartofsky (1977) questions the ability of Husserl's phenomenology to understand historical praxis - the concentration on the subject (consciousness and Ego) and its structures leads to a distancing from historical practice. It fails to account for participation in social structures and misinterprets the nature of knowledge and meaning. Knowledge is not gained by reflection upon one's own self but rather by practice and interaction within and with the world.

His horizons of experience and his striving for description without presupposition suggest that he strove for subjectivity to such an extent that it became a kind of objectivity. The idea of no presuppositions, no prejudices, runs contrary to much current archaeological thinking. The inevitability of such prejudice, and the necessity of recognising it (it may be a *good thing*) have been accepted and even welcomed as part of, say, a hermeneutic approach (Hodder 1992, Chapter 15). Barrett (1994, 81) highlights the important relationship between experience and expectation, of social knowledge regarding how and when to act in social or ritual situations. This would be both taught and learned. We are powerless to decontextualise our lives. We must accept this and understand this, not attempt to by-pass or avoid it. Husserl himself later accepted this, stating that the relationship of subject to object in the future will have a certain kind of intentionality dependent on the subject-object relationships of the past.

Husserl adopted a Cartesian standpoint (mind-body duality) in his phenomenology, and gave little thought to the body in his earlier works. When he did, in *The Crisis* (1970), he created a different duality of the physical body and the living body - the same body, yet differently conceptualised by self. The living body is experienced only by the transcendental consciousness, a kind of soul. Attempts have been made to avoid such anthropocentrism in recent archaeological writing, including Thomas (1996a) and Karlsson (1997, 1998). It



is such confusion, and distancing, which Thomas warns against because here we have the body which moves in space, experiencing the world, somehow split from our consciousness. We cannot treat the body as a mere object, elevating the mind to a transcendental status. He argues that knowledge of the world around us comes partially from the interactions of beings with the world and in the world (1996a). The world is not revealed to us by studying our own minds, but by living in that world.

So we can see that his phenomenology has several aspects which are problematic for the archaeologist, even when viewed at such a superficial level. The emphasis of the conscious self (solipsism) leaves little room for the consideration of social relationships and the ontological nature of his project is too detached from the material remains we have to work with. Our presuppositions and understandings, as archaeologists, would be downplayed or ignored. He re-emphasises the mind-body division of traditional philosophy and science, but has little to say on the latter.

Husserl has, however, maintained a relevance for some archaeologists. Karlsson (1998) suggests that there are two aspects of his phenomenology which could potentially be of use. Firstly, it allows us to see the basis for the scientific perspective of the world, and so how empirical data is generated (which as archaeologists we inevitably will have to make use of). Secondly, he did influence later generations of philosophers to explore phenomenologies with differing emphases through specific critiques of his work. His phenomenology spawned (through critique) the existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, the hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger, and the early structural phenomenology of Ricoeur, all of which have been exploited by archaeologists in the last decade. The latter reflects Karlsson's approach, and here I am also using Husserl as a point of departure for a later phenomenology.



### 5.5. 'Towards a Heideggerian archaeology'

Husserl saw later phenomenologies (and in particular that of his student Martin Heidegger) as a betrayal of his teachings, and bemoaned, "philosophy as a science, as serious, rigorous, indeed apodictically rigorous science - the dream is over" (Husserl 1970, 389). However, it is these late phenomenologies which have proved of most use in archaeological thinking. Before moving on to think about those which have been most influential and of interest to me, I will discuss the use of Heideggerian phenomenology in archaeology. This section draws heavily on commentaries on *Being and Time* including Dreyfus (1991) and Thomas (1996a).

There is no time here to go into a detailed discussion of Heidegger's philosophy. It is full of difficult and complex concepts, expressed in contorted and created words and phrases which he used to try to answer a question which had bothered him since his youth - *why are things?* He accused all philosophers for several millennia of anthropocentrism and of concentrating on discussing beings, but not their Being (with a capital B). His major, unfinished work, *Being and Time* (1962) addressed this problem. Central to his argument is *Dasein*, or Being-in-the-world, or Being-there, a being which is concerned with its own Being. Its existence matters to it. *Dasein* is completely self-interpretative. When we come to see our Being, we realise we are already in the world, coping with other beings, and this is the context of our interpretations. We are involved in the world, and it is disclosed, or made meaningful to us, by our experience of it.

Beings which we encounter include tools or equipment. These can only be disclosed to us through using them, in reference to other tools. When we use a tool such as a hammer, after a while, we become unaware of the tool - it becomes part of us. The tool is *available*. Much of our life is spent in this state. Only when something goes wrong - the tool breaks or fails, and becomes *unavailable*, do we notice it again. We must deliberately act to correct the situation. But at some points in our lives there may be a total breakdown and we cannot easily sort out such a problem. We must sit back and theoretically reflect on a situation. We can



either remain helpless, or attempt to solve this problem. It is only here that Heidegger recognises the traditional subject-object dichotomy he usually rejects, at the point of total breakdown or *occurrence*. Space can also have states of *availableness*, *unavailableness*, and *occurrence*. Public space can become *unavailable* to lots of people. Involvement with beings like tools, and space, can illustrate our coping with the world. Heidegger gives the example of the pavement - we walk on it, touching it, yet never pay any attention to it – we are lost in coping.

Much of Heidegger's phenomenology is concerned with the hermeneutic circle. We are self-interpretative and must enter the circle, but as is the nature of our Being, when we do enter this circle we find we are already in it, interpreting ourselves through our Being-in-the-world.

The use of the complex ontological writings of Martin Heidegger are both contentious and problematic. It was first introduced to the archaeological community by Gosden in his book, *Social Being and Time* (1994) and mentioned as an influence by Tilley (1994). However, the arrival of Thomas's *Time, Culture and Identity*, published in 1996, provoked a heated response from Karlsson (1997, 1998) and a debate on Heidegger and Archaeology filled almost a complete issue of the Dutch journal, *Archaeological Dialogues*, in 1996.

He enters into a detailed analysis of Heidegger in *Time, Culture and Identity*, an intensely personal interpretation of some archaeological problems such as monumentality and the Mesolithic - Neolithic transition. It is a difficult but nevertheless important work. Some would say it has wrong areas of emphasis, others would consider it fatally flawed either intellectually or morally. All accept it is a brave and imaginative attempt to add something new to the areas of debate and interpretative archaeology as a whole. He was attempting to work through what a Heideggerian archaeology could look like.



Whereas in his previous book, *Rethinking the Neolithic* (1991) Thomas cited in his introduction alone Ricoeur, Foucault, Nietzsche, Derrida, Bourdieu, in *Time, Culture and Identity*, he concentrates on one influence, Martin Heidegger. The book consists of two (very distinct) parts. The first, entitled, *A Phenomenological Archaeology?* sets out an introduction of some of Heidegger's works, and in particular Part I of *Being and Time*. The second part, *Three Histories*, considers from the basis of this theoretical backdrop, some archaeological case-studies. He wants to consider three issues which archaeology has so far failed to properly address - time, identity and material culture.

He suggests that the temporal nature of *Dasein* leads people to create narrative (verbally and physically) to establish and maintain their identity. The disclosure of *Dasein* as a Being-in-the-world involves the present (the social world *Dasein* finds itself already in), the past (feelings inspired by past events), and the future (using available resources and experiences of the past to plan for the future). All three are included in the narratives of *Dasein*. Thomas subtly alters the concept of material culture as text, by suggesting that the material record may not be a text as such, but that we see it as a text-like body of information.

He also subtly criticises recent archaeological writings on spaces and places, some of which I have touched or will do so later. Thomas, through a Heideggerian reading of space, suggests that meanings of places can only be disclosed by human activity within these spaces. Just as we can only understand objects by using them, so it is the same with space. Certain spaces gain meaning and importance through repeated acts and experiences in that space. This has interesting implications for the study of monuments, and it slightly moves the burden of interpreting space from a purely subjective one as advocated by Tilley (1994) to a more hermeneutical dialectic between person and place.

One of Thomas' case-studies looks at Mount Pleasant, a henge monument in southern Dorset. He discusses the development of sites in the area up to the construction of the henge in the Late Neolithic, and then looked at the changes in



the site and landscape through into the Bronze Age. He stressed the role of structured deposition of artefacts and the location of burials in changing the nature of place, and setting up outside - inside and above - below relationships in the symbolism of the enclosure. The site was part of a process of dividing off the wider landscape. Like Tilley's account of the Dorset cursus (1994) Thomas notes that Mount Pleasant was located to exploit subtle changes in topography and so control vision and movement.

A correct direction of movement is established within the enclosure by standing stones and architectural features, symbolically impassable rather than physically unpassable obstacles. For Thomas, such features were a type of architectural mnemonic, controlling and restricting access to certain places and making sure you approach parts of the experience in particular ways. The activity which took place was also restricted - deposition of different types of pottery was restricted to different parts of the ditch for instance. These were aids to memory, to remind people constantly of the parts they played in the rituals, and in society. It defined and re-created group identity, calling on the past and looking to the future. Other processes may have been going on. Substances and concepts were linked through deposition and spatial location, like death with stones. The architecture may have allowed different people to have different experiences in the henge.

Into the Bronze Age, further architectural order suggested a further control. Unusually for the large henge monuments of Wessex it still seemed to be a focus for activity, as the landscape around it became increasingly ordered with field boundaries and enclosed settlements. Mount Pleasant was an *axis mundi*, a microcosm of the landscape, and into the Bronze Age the changing order of the world was reflected by the increasing organisation inside and outwith the henge, perhaps driving each other on.

Criticisms of Thomas' book and his attempt to write an Heideggerian phenomenology fall into three general camps. Firstly, some believe we should not use Heidegger's philosophy in archaeology at all. There are those who believe



that it is simply not ethical to get involved in thinking in a way that Heidegger, a full fledged member of the Nazi party, suggests we do. Other may suggest that it has no place in archaeology at all - Heidegger never intended his work to be social theory. Secondly, the division of the book into two distinct parts symbolises the failure of Thomas to destroy dichotomies. The format of his book clearly can be seen as a theory - practice divide, regardless of his arguments to the contrary (see for instance Thomas 1996b). Thirdly, his reading of Heidegger has been called into question. I shall now look at these issues in a little more detail.

In a short paper discussing *Time, Culture and Identity*, Gosden (1996) captures the dilemma of using Heidegger in archaeology. Heidegger wrote with the backdrop of Germany's defeat in the First World War. From this sprang a series of writers who forged radical new languages, new expressions, a kind of rebirth. Often, the writers looked to the past - to great societies and civilisations - for the roots of rebirth. This mood seems to slot in well with National Socialism. Thomas acknowledges that Heidegger was a member of the Nazi party at least from 1933 to 1945 (Steiner 1992).

Steiner however believes that Heidegger's consistent silence after 1945 is more disturbing than his lectures and affiliations before that date, but fails to see any clear link between *Being and Time*, written pre-National Socialism, and the evils of anti-semitism, the Holocaust, and the Nazi atrocities. Indeed it could also be argued that Heidegger's earlier works predict rather than indicate the horrors to follow.

Nevertheless, it must also be made clear that Heidegger did use his position at Freiberg university to promote National Socialism, caught up in the atmosphere engulfing Germany of the possible rebirth of the nation that earlier writers and writings had wanted. The mid-1930's was probably characterised by the cowardice of his post-war utterings. His known works of this period are often shameful, as, according to Steiner, they suggested a man caught up in, and



seduced by, the atmosphere of the time. Once the war was over he failed ever to denounce or indeed speak of the Holocaust, and indeed published unedited some of his work of the 1930's long after the war (Steiner 1992). This may have more to do with an anger at the way so many others were falling over themselves to do so as Thomas claims, but this is no excuse.

What then should be our response to Heidegger? Thomas argues that only three responses are possible - ignore the man and accept his philosophy; reject out-right all of his works because of his political beliefs; or use his theories critically and responsibly, never losing sight of the context from which they were produced. He writes, "The third possible attitude to Heidegger's philosophy lies, then, in recognising that no set of ideas is likely to be either so wholly correct as to be above suspicion or so wholly corrupt as to be dismissed out of hand. Instead all sets of ideas deserve to be regarded with equal suspicion....What this means is that if we are to read Heidegger and use his ideas, we must do so critically, and with the utmost vigilance." (1996a, 4). Yet the occupation of virtually all of the introduction by this discussion seems to me at times angst ridden, as if Thomas himself is not convinced of this approach, which could cynically be called a fudge.

Perhaps a more constructive route is taken by Håkan Karlsson in his book, *Being and post-processional archaeological thinking* (1997), partially a response to Thomas' book. He considers the programmes of National Socialism and Heidegger's *Being and Time*. The turn towards Being which Heidegger's work points towards was seen by Karlsson as towards National Socialism, towards Hitler. Yet Karlsson argues that his later work illustrates that he realised that he had made a fundamental error in his earlier writings and his turn towards Nazism. He twisted his ideas to fit Nazi politics, because he saw an opportunity for a nation to rediscover their own Being and turn from the dead ends of Communism and Capitalism.



It is clear this debate will not end here, and Heidegger can be viewed at extremes as either the an evil mind behind the Holocaust, or as a cowardly opportunist, pinning his hopes on the first chance which came along to turn his nation. Thomas, in my view, doesn't make a good enough case for justifying the use of Heidegger, whereas Karlsson begins to help us move to a point where we can accept his work wasn't leading the way, but being corrupted in the 1930's. Certainly, Heidegger deserves our contempt for his actions (or inaction) but we cannot discount his central message so easily.

On purely an epistemological level, Oudeman feels that Heidegger has nothing to offer archaeology. He says, "Heidegger's thought has nothing to do either with method or with the foundation of an area of investigation like archaeology. The archaeologists had better stay away from it. That is as it should be" (1996, 32). He argues that there is an abyss between philosophy and archaeology which Thomas' book only succeeds in highlighting through the two-parts of his book. Thomas defends the division of text, arguing that he has not simply come up with a theory, then fitted archaeological examples around them, but rather tacked between the sections, a hermeneutical process (1996b). This isn't entirely apparent in the text itself. Patton writes that, "it may well be that Thomas arrived at certain insights as a result of his reading of Heidegger and, as such, it is appropriate that he should acknowledge this intellectual debt, but none of the interpretations developed in the final three chapters has any necessary dependence on the philosophical position outlined in chapter 1" (1996, 35).

Other criticisms concentrate on the implications of certain reading of Heidegger's work. Patton (1996) queries the role of *Dasein* in archaeology, because it can be used as defining humanity only. He asks if we should consider the Being-in-the-world of Neanderthals, and how. Also, Heidegger's philosophy was not social theory, yet Thomas applies it to social identity and social concepts of time. Are these over-stretched generalisations?



Karlsson (1997, 1998) discusses at great length the later work of Heidegger, who realised that his phenomenological approach itself suffered from the anthropocentrism he wanted to escape from, and so reviled. He turned to a new concept, Being-as-history, and began an analysis of thinking about thinking. Thomas fails to acknowledge this in his book, and his 'incorrect' early Heideggerian archaeology suffers from all the faults Heidegger saw in Empiricism for instance. Karlsson undertakes an interesting critique of all strands of post-processual archaeology, including post-structuralism and hermeneutics, arguing that the stress on subjectivity is a one-way process, with the role of the object simply a meaningless thing onto which the subject superimposes meaning. Karlsson (1996) argues for a contemplative archaeology, thinking about thinking and the ontological origins of what we study, both as a deeper way of understanding why things *are*, and allowing us to contemplate our own Being and critique current archaeological viewpoints. In response, Thomas (1996b) argues that because of Heidegger's political background, we cannot accept all things he wrote. We must be rigorous and selective.

These are some general points about *Time, Culture and Identity*, a book I found, as an archaeologist, very difficult to read and understand. It has stimulated interesting debate, not least about the role of phenomenology in archaeology, but has also drawn into attention the need to carefully consider the sources of ideas which archaeologists are currently using. Thomas concludes this discussion nicely himself, from his introduction to *Rethinking the Neolithic* - "Writing the past, then, is an endless task, in which each act of putting pen to paper is admitted to be a failure to grasp some elusive truth. Such a truth is always already absent from written discourse" (1991, 6).

### 5.6. The involved phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty

In this chapter I really want to concentrate on the less well known Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and in particular his influential work, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, originally published in 1945 (first published in English in 1962). As I



have stated earlier, I am an archaeologist and not a philosopher, and so have sought various sources in helping me to better understand his work (Rabil 1967; Mallin 1979; Langer 1989; Hammond *et al* 1991), and these I will draw on heavily throughout this section.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty was a contemporary of Sartre (just three years his junior in fact) and both espoused differing brands of existentialism, reacting to previous 'phenomenologies'. Their approach was less structured than Husserl's was, and less obscure and ontological than Heidegger. Unlike Husserl, they were more concerned with human interaction with the world than a painstaking analysis of the subject or consciousness. Merleau-Ponty used much of Husserl's epistemology, taking this position as the subjective pole in his dialectical approach (which I will outline in more detail later). Sartre re-wrote *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962) from a Marxist, existentialist point of view in his *Being and Nothingness* (1958).

Sartre agreed with many of Husserl's key concepts such as the intentionality of consciousness and his rejection of realism, but substantially disagreed on significant other concepts, from the phenomenological *époché* (the suspension of belief) to the need for the concept of a transcendental Ego. He, along with Merleau-Ponty, saw the Ego as representing both the idealism and solipsism of transcendental phenomenology, and both attempted to avoid this by decentralising the ego.

For instance, Sartre believed conscious acts were more important to describe than consciousness itself. This is a practicality of everyday life – after all, when we are doing something, we think about what we are doing and not the consciousness behind it. In the same way, when describing something (a table, a tree, a building, an experience), we must describe only what we see, not what we think it is. "Sartre takes his task to be one of describing the objective world stripped of all meaning, all conceptualisation....that is to say, of all features or characteristics which a description may hope to pick out" (Hammond *et al* 1991,



111). (In the same way, Merleau-Ponty stressed the role of phenomenology in describing, not analysing). Sartre saw this as an indication of a distinction between the described and the describer (*being-in-itself* and *being-for-itself*) and from this point his phenomenological descriptions could begin.

Merleau-Ponty disagreed with Sartre on this distinction, feeling it didn't properly explain relationships between 'self and others' (Schmidt 1985, 59). Instead, he had a distinctive project, playing out his phenomenological descriptions by undertaking critiques of both empirical and intellectualist solutions to problems within psychology and physiology. Through this dialectic he hoped to reveal a 'third way'. He rejected the transcendental Ego of Husserl, and instead concentrated on being-in-the-world. He believed phenomenology was primarily a process of describing rather than explaining.

The unusual interweaving of psychology and philosophy, so central to his work, was influenced by his formal education. After his birth in Rochefort-sur-Mer in 1908, he attended schools including the Ecole Normale Supérieure, the foremost school in France for young men. Here, and during his early teaching work, he studied philosophy and psychology and his career continued to draw on both disciplines. "In 1949 Merleau-Ponty came to Paris as Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne with a special assignment in child psychology" (Rabil 1967, vii). His early publications dealt with critiques of rationalism, objectivity and psychology, looking in particular at psychological case-studies. His concerns were to look at the relationships of people and the world "without either reducing man to nature or nature to reason" (*ibid.* 4).

#### **5.6.1. The critique of the objectivist world**

Merleau-Ponty's methodology was very much based around his dialectical approach, working through critiques of empiricist and intellectualist interpretations of human experiences. These are represented, for instance, by traditional scientific disciplines at the objective pole, and idealistic, consciousness orientated philosophies (perfectly illustrated by Husserlian



phenomenology) at the subjective pole. Although both seem completely opposed, representing extremes of objectivity and subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty argued that both were grounded in what he called 'objectivism', and so based on a series of similar and dangerous assumptions. This is more of an attitude than an intellectual framework, a mis-guided belief that we live in an objectivist world.

What did he mean by this assertion? In the objectivist world, there is an attitude that suggests that human perception of the world can explain all phenomena it encounters, regardless of whether the world actually exists or not. Empiricist approaches simply assume that the world exists, whereas idealist approaches may suspend judgement on this and carry on regardless. (Langer (1989) suggests that a major shortcoming of Merleau-Ponty's work is that he fails to address the question of the reality of the world himself to any great degree).

Both work on the basis that we perceive all objects as determinate, with clear edges and so fully describable. Distinct boundaries are presumed, from the Cartesian object-subject division downwards, and experienced (described) things are seen as black and white, yes or no, heads or tails. However, he does not accept this - there is always ambiguity, variety and contradiction in all our experiences, in the *lived world*. Things are blurred and never fully disclosed to us, like a rabbit rushing across the road in the headlights of your car, caught with the corner of the eye. Experience is ambiguous. The 'objectivist world' therefore represents the anthropocentrism of Cartesianism. It misses the point that there are no clear-cut divisions between subject and object, mind and body, or even Sartre's in-itself and for-itself (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Langer 1989).

Furthermore, whilst objectivist thought states that the properties of objects are externally related (changing one property does not change others), Merleau-Ponty contested that properties such as texture, colour and density are intrinsically internally related, with each varying with experience, each effecting the other and how we perceive them. (For instance, if we change the lighting of an object, then the colour will automatically be altered).



His methodology was constructed around looking at case studies of abnormal psychology, examining the way that empiricists (physiologists) and intellectualists (psychologists) explained disturbing experiences such as phantom limbs, inverted vision, lack of spatial awareness and hallucinations. It was through the study of the abnormal that he could begin to think about the assumptions that underlie the normal. He worked from the empiricist account of a case, critiquing but also carrying forward helpful ideas or things that could not be ignored. He then looked at intellectualist explanations for these disorders, again offering a critique but drawing out useful ideas. From this he hoped to develop a 'third way' (a modern trendy terminology associated more with post-modernism and New Labour) of explaining the world, an existential phenomenology, involving a different way of viewing the body and the world it inhabits.

### 5.6.2. Perception

One major area of Merleau-Ponty's work was on the nature of perception, and here he applied his dialectical approach. Traditional scientific analysis of how we experience things through any of the senses is very much based on a cause and effect scenario, where an external object stimulates the body in some way (visually, aurally and so on) through one of the sensory organs which creates a 'sensation'. Colour, for instance, produces a certain wavelength of light that stimulates the retina in the eye. This sensation is of redness.

Merleau-Ponty argued that this is not how we perceive. We do not merely see a colour, but the thing that is that colour (we see a red carpet, not red). Light, shadow, texture, size, shape, proximity and so on shape our visual perceptions. This is not constant, nor is the colour perceived. Empiricists argue that we identify what we perceive through associations with past experiences. We draw on our memory to project a unity onto the different aspects of an experience – yet how do we know what the correct memories are? This suggests that there is some pre-understanding which tells us which memory is relevant.



Intellectualist accounts, by way of contrast, dismisses the role of sensations. We are interpreting what we experienced rather than the attributes projected by the perceived object. Rather, it is a process of *judgement*, a combination of the senses and inferences. An object is seen as an idealised whole and attempts would be made to describe this idealised whole in terms of all possible horizons of experience. What we cannot see is expected to conform to this idea. In effect, the perceived thing is constituted by the mind, and is only being experienced because of the person experiencing it.

Once again, there is an element of pre-understanding here, of already knowing what to project outwards. “By reducing perception to thought, intellectualism blinds itself to our pre-scientific experience and fails to account for it...” (Langer 1989, 91). Merleau-Ponty also argued that there was no place in this kind of analysis of perception for perspective, for the relative positions of the person and the thing. The idealised type of thing one is looking at comes pre-conceived as a certain image of a standard size and angle of view. The quality of experience is not really diminished by distance, view, lighting conditions and so on.

Neither of these approaches are ideal and do not capture the ambiguities of perception. Equally, Merleau-Ponty does not dismiss them totally and draws ideas from each (for instance, the role of the body in perceiving from empiricism and the internally related nature of properties of perceived things from intellectualism). From this point, he could move towards his phenomenology of perception. Things are not constant when perceived (either as physical constants like ‘redness’ or as idealised objects), viewed differently every time but still mentally the same thing. Rather, they vary with each look.

It is rather like aerial photography in archaeology. Cropmarks appear to us under specific conditions. Even then they vary greatly dependent on previous weather, current weather, soil conditions, crop types, light levels, farming techniques, time of year, time of day, which window the observer is looking out of, and various



other factors. The sites recorded are not constant, appearing differently every year (if at all) and revealing different aspects of itself. Nor can we have an ideal image of the site (which is what a typological classification would be) as we cannot be sure we see it all as they are never fully disclosed to us. Cropmarks are ambiguous, although this is rarely acknowledged, and attempts to describe them in the past have fallen into the traps of the objectivist world.

This same approach was also applied to other problems, each again stressing the pros and cons of traditional explanations and working out a third way of thinking about some aspect of experiencing the world. One such case study was of hallucinations, which he felt had not been adequately explained by traditional approaches. Empiricists suggest a physiological origin for the hallucination because objects are viewed as if real. Intellectualists would disagree. The sufferer can tell the difference between real objects and those in hallucinations, and so knows that the experience is not real. “Whereas the empiricist cannot explain how the subject knows that it has been hallucinating, the intellectualist cannot explain how the subject...can nonetheless be convinced that it is seeing and hearing things” (Hammond *et al* 2003). Merleau-Ponty suggests that hallucinations are ambiguous and therefore cannot be explained away in terms of a clear-cut example. They deceive and yet they do not deceive. They are known not to be real and yet the experience is real.

### 5.6.3. The body

The vital role of the body is emphasised by his study of the disturbing phenomena of phantom limbs and anosognosia. These are related conditions, the former involving the sensation of still possessing a limb, hand or foot lost through accident or amputation, the other the feeling that a limb no longer exists, when in fact it is present but paralysed. Merleau-Ponty sets out the intellectual problem. “A strictly physiological account fails to explain how a limb which is in part no longer physically part of the body can nevertheless be experienced and, alternatively, how a limb which has become paralysed can be systematically left



out of account even though it is still part of the body and has not actually become anaesthetised” (Langer 1989, 28).

The paradox of why the patient is fully aware of the loss or paralysis, yet continues to act as if nothing was wrong (like trying to walk) is not easily explained by empiricism or intellectualism. The ambiguity of such limb sensations is well illustrated by a case recounted by Sacks (1985). A patient who awoke every night in his bed, aware of a cold hairy leg lying beside him. He threw it out of the bed, and promptly fell out of the bed after it – it was his leg. Yet even after this was explained to him he would do exactly the same thing the following night. The patient could also not explain where his own left leg was.

Phantom limbs cannot be suitably explained either by suggesting that the experience is a product of a memory of the previous experience of the limb (the patient *knows* he has lost his leg), or merely a psychological aberration, the product of the imagination (the patient *feels* the leg). Rather, Merleau-Ponty suggests that it is an experience of the ‘former present’, where “...the subject remains emotionally involved in a particular past experience to such a degree that it imposes itself on the actual present” (Langer 1989, 34). These examples show the temporal nature of the body and of our experiences, where everything we do is in the present, and yet depends on past knowledge and experiences, and is part of a future project.

A substantial part of the ‘third way’ is Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the body, which is markedly different from those of the objectivist world. He arrives at this through a phenomenological description of space (for instance, through an experiment with spectacles that invert visible objects to being upside-down). Empirical accounts regard the body as a mere object, capable of being studied and interpreted like any other object, whilst idealised accounts regard the body as a container for the conscious subject (both important pointers to the anthropocentrism of these concepts). But Merleau-Ponty argued that the body plays a vital role in interacting with the world, that it is not only the instrument of



being in the world, but it is also interested in its world and allows us to identify ourselves with certain projects through time (Langer 1989, chapter I.3). (This again stresses the temporal nature of being). The body exists in, and is part of, the *life-world*, undergoing experience that is pre-reflective (pre-objective) and the description of this experience is never immediate. Such experiences cannot be accounted for by Cartesian concepts of a mind-body duality. Rather, he believed that phenomenological descriptions had to centre around the way the subject-body acts within the world.

He happily accepts that empiricists acknowledge the role of the body in perceiving and experiencing through the sensory organs and the physical presence of the body itself. He also takes on board the fact that intellectualism stresses the subjective role of these experiences. The body has a privileged position in perception, in the world, right there when things happen and so allows the subject to be "...involved in perception [at all]. The experience of things in the world is lived from a certain point of view: the body's" (Hammond *et al* 1991, 188). Not only that, he suggests that the body is the holder of pre-reflective knowledge which allows us to act and cope in certain ways and helps us to interpret our experiences. The body is not the object of intentionality, but rather the body is intentionality. We *already know* how to act and how to perceive.

This pre-reflective knowledge is built up through years of experience through habits and learning. The role of the body can be seen in learning activities such as playing a musical instrument or dancing. I used to play the tuba and learning it was neither the process of carefully thinking about everything I did, nor of simply replicating the notes on the manuscript on front of me. As my body learned the actions of what I was doing, I didn't have to think what I needed to do next, which valve to press, when to inhale. I learned what to do, how to sit, my body feeling its way into the instrument and the music. Yet I was also free to subjectively express myself through the music, constrained neither by my body nor the musical instructions. When I came to new pieces, my body was already 'primed' in how to act, and yet ready to improvise, to feel my way into it. This is



the ambiguity of acting and experiencing where the body is involved in the world.

So understanding a series of actions (such as a series of ritual acts in a sequence which we could expect to occur in a cursus monument) is not merely learned and repeated. The body 'feels' its way, developing 'habits'. The body also addresses the world in a series of different 'attitudes', encapsulating a group of certain properties (feelings, expressions, and body language) which are internally related, so that if one changes the 'attitude' alters along with the other properties. No longer is the body an object of consciousness as Husserl saw it, but rather, a body-in-action, the *subject-body* (compare this with Cartesianism where the body is an object). Many of the actions we are involved in are difficult to describe simply because we take them for granted - some are not even noticed (Hammond *et al* 1991).

Langer (1989) describes this process as the body being an expressive space, which comes into contact with objects such as a piano, which makes it expressive as well and brings it into the body's space. "Bodily spatiality, inherently dynamic, is the very condition for the coming of being of a meaningful world" (*ibid.* 47). This is the *subject-body*. The importance of the body, as the point of contact between the subject and object, the point of 'fusion' between the two is in the ambiguity of the body, "...which must be regarded as belonging to the subject and the object at the same time" (Rabil 1967, 20). The body experiences the world, not as a revelation of having always been there (*dasein*) but rather as entering a world which it already has knowledge and experience of. But, vitally important, the body is still coming into being and projecting itself out to the world.

### 5.6.4. Space

So while the world and learned social rules are around us, seemingly constraining the body, we also have the ability to project ourselves out, to improvise, to subjectively act and to create new aspects of the world. We are constantly



experiencing, but not constantly thinking about what we are doing. (Langer (1989) gives the example of reversing a car down an alley without having to think about the measurements of vehicle and passage). This is a similar idea to Heideggers's concept of being lost-in-coping. We constantly perceive space and are always in a space but we do not give this much conscious thought.

Relp (1976) identifies five different types or levels of space as encountered by humans. These include perceptual space, where space is relative - things and places are viewed as far or near, touchable or out of reach, based on the 'life-space' of a person, tied in with individual movement and memories. Merleau-Ponty argued that such perceptions of near and far are not simply relative to a constant landmark (self, horizons), but aspects of the relationship between *subject-body* and the world. They are related to the level of detail or richness one has of the object or place perceived, the ability one has to identify it. As Merleau-Ponty saw no firm limits to experience, this reflects on the relative level of ambiguity of what is perceived. To this is added a temporal aspect - objects can move in and out of visibility.

This can also be applied to movement in space which is not simply a series of changes in location of an identical object, but rather is lived and experienced by us (Langer 1989). Mobility within space, both experienced and created, forms part of this interaction and is identified by Relp (1976) as existential space. From this point, it is a short conceptual step to architectural space and that is where cursus monuments come in. Monuments were places of movement.

Rather than have us abandon the natural world to doubt as Husserl did, Merleau-Ponty showed that in fact we belong to it. Both subject and object have their origins in pre-reflective experience described through phenomenological reflection. It has been argued that he concentrates too much on reflective experience, giving little consideration to the actual act, the 'birth of meaning' (Langer 1989, 157-9). However there is a certain character and humanity about his phenomenology which impels in us the responsibility to consider just how



those in the past created - and were created by - the world, space, and people around them.

This existentialist phenomenology suffers from one of the major criticisms of all phenomenologies, namely that of solipsism. Whilst Sartre and Merleau-Ponty offered an alternative to ideas of a transcendental Ego or the self-obsessed *Dasein*, there is still a concentration on the individual and less consideration given to the social world or interaction with others. Merleau-Ponty does discuss what he calls the *interworld*, which we are all involved in. It can be recognised through the shared cultural values and experiences we have. Children recognise the intentionality in adult actions through their *body image* (the perception of oneself) and copy this. They are already in an interpersonal world and the body is learning and adopting habits. This recognition is pre-reflective. Thus we live in a (social) environment in which our body knows how to act and can recognise the actions of others (*ibid.* 1989).

### 5.6.5. Merleau-Ponty and archaeology

The use of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty in archaeology has been influential, if only briefly credited. Thomas suggested a reading of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty through the 'lens' of Foucault and Marx (1993, 74-5) as part of an '*historical phenomenology*'. Here he is concerned with how humans come to understand the world around them and see themselves as 'subjects'. Tilley also finds Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology appealing - "Merleau-Ponty argues that the human body provides the fundamental mediation point between thought and the world" (1994, 14). Alongside Heidegger, this forms the phenomenological basis of much of their recent work (Thomas 1993, 1996a; Tilley 1993a, 1994, 1996, 1999).

The 'third way' that Merleau-Ponty strove for, the phenomenological way, was never properly developed in his *magnum opus*. Langer writes, "...his preoccupation with 'empiricism' and 'intellectualism' is no doubt at least partially responsible for the relative lack of development in his own position"



(1989, 173). His failure to properly discuss such issues as ambiguity, truth, intentionality, power, nature, culture, and the relationship between reader and text, leave his work open to criticism from those he takes so much time to criticise (*ibid.* 1989). What, then, can we take from the above discussion in terms that are meaningful for us as archaeologists? Perhaps we should start with the dismissed realist and idealist approaches.

Merleau-Ponty draws from his critical dialectical approach strands from both poles which are valuable to his construct, the 'third way'. For instance, in the role of perception, he accepts the empiricist position that his body is involved in perceiving objects (but not that his body itself is an object). Excavation provides a physical basis through which archaeologists can communicate and build on. Intellectualism does acknowledge that there is a network of relationships shared by perceiver and perceived (but rejects the concept of consciousness bringing objects into being) (Hammond *et al* 1991). This has stressed the value to archaeologists of subjectivity and human agency.

How would Merleau-Ponty consider the possibilities of archaeology, of thinking about past subjects and their activities? Firstly, how do we view *our own* past? The temporal sequence of being-in-the-world leads to us being 'outrun' by our pasts and future, in that we are always able to anticipate and remember. Our temporality is ambiguous, our whole life our present. "All attempts to reconstruct my own past as I actually lived it, are doomed to failure; henceforth that past eludes me and can exist only in an 'ambiguous presence'" (Langer 1989, 101). Certainly, the phenomenological accounts of archaeological sites (discussed in more depth below) often seem to be descriptions of the past in the present, and someone else's past at that. Merleau-Ponty argued that we could recognise other *subject-bodies* although never 'coincide' with them. He contested that experiences are social and pre-reflective. It is only in interpretation that descriptions of that social experience become personal. As archaeologists, do we lose this pre-reflective 'interpersonal' aspect of experience? "I am unable ever to coincide with others, to experience their experiences as they themselves do" (*ibid.* 101).



We also have the problem of having to experience things which our bodies simply have not experienced in our social environment. We have no store of meaningful or relevant experiences, except if you count being around similar sites, or knowing of similar sites. How do I visit a cursus monument and come up with an interpretation which is neither a groundless flight of fancy (intellectualism) or a bland generalisation (empiricism)? Heidegger's idea of only being able to understand something by using it falls down when we have no idea how to use something. Perhaps Merleau-Ponty would suggest that new experiences simply lead us to a more conscious process of perception, that is, we actually think about what we are doing.

Experiencing archaeological sites is strange, outwith our normal experiences and perhaps these are our 'disorders', or abnormal behaviour, where we can see things about the way we experience that are usually lost beneath the surface of everyday life. Life is ambiguous, and so is archaeology, and so are monuments. Just as Merleau-Ponty found meaning through the phantom limb, so archaeological traces are mere phantoms, itches we cannot properly scratch. Through them perhaps we can begin to realise that there can be no (more) clear-cut solutions to 'archaeological problems', but only ambiguity, possibilities and blurred edges.

### 5.7. Phenomenologies of landscape and place

*"I...spent much time alone in the Garrotxa landscape, seeking to experience and understand it as deeply as I could. I travelled on foot, wherever possible, to saturate myself better in Garrotxa and to integrate myself sensorily"* (Nogué i Font 1993, 166).

There has been a definite concern with the concept of landscape in theoretical archaeology, moving it from the empirical background of human activity, or some kind of neutral source of nutrition and life, to being a central part of the



way that people define themselves, and experience the world (see chapter 7 for a fuller discussion). The phenomenology of landscape fits well in this area of research, and it is here that we can begin to move towards real, practical applications for what has until now been a rather abstract discussion. The sites discussed in the opening few chapters need to be re-thought, and it is from within a phenomenological framework that I hope to do this.

Before moving on to the areas of experiencing and re-thinking these sites it is important to begin looking at past phenomenologies of landscape, not only as a guide to approaching these sites but also as a point of critique to move towards more meaningful and reflective archaeology of Scotland's *cursus* monuments. My phenomenologies of landscape (stories and experiences) are captured in the following chapter, presented chronologically. Each new experience feeds off the earlier. My fieldwork became a hermeneutical process, using a critique of Tilley (1994) as a pole of dialogue, and so there is an element of overlap in these two chapters.

### 5.7.1. Phenomenology and geography

As earlier discussed, phenomenology was used in other social sciences and disciplines before its introduction to archaeology (anthropology, human geography, religious studies, architecture, ecology and so on). The development of Geography in the second half of this century to an extent was a forerunner of ideological changes in archaeology. New Geography was pioneered in the 1950's, and followed within a few decades by a series of approaches critical of this, born of disillusionment with the lack of concern for individuals (agency) and a perceived quest for objectivity. (Like archaeology, human geography is not as scientific as some would like to believe).

As mentioned earlier, Relph (1981) identified three levels of phenomenology one of that was a non-philosophical level, introduced into social sciences. Phenomenology was just one of a series of new (with a small n) approaches adopted in geography in the 1970's, alongside existentialism, realism, idealism,



Marxism, structuralism, pragmatism, and hermeneutics (Unwin 1992; Buttimer 1996). These developments were critiques of positivism and empiricism that were embodied in inflexible idealised models such as Chrystaler's theory. The criticisms levelled were very much like those made of the New Archaeology.

Phenomenology was first introduced into geography in the early 1970's, and its applications have been primarily concerned with landscape, and in particular, places and the perception of places (Taun 1974; Relph 1976, 1996; Nogué i Font 1993). It is perhaps no coincidence that phenomenological archaeologies have also often highlighted the significance of places (or *locales* as Tilley (1994) calls them). The solipsism of Husserl's phenomenology did not lend itself to geographical studies (Unwin 1992) and other influences such as Schutz's contemplative phenomenology (1967) were adopted, with the aim to look more towards meaning on an everyday level, rather than a ontological or transcendental level (Relph 1981; Unwin 1992).

Relph in particular combined the ideas of phenomenology with place. He was concerned with places within the landscape and the meanings and importance of these places to people, who often define(d) them. He approached the concept of place from a phenomenological perspective. He wanted to think about how places were experienced, and argued that "...a phenomenological understanding regards places as tightly interconnecting assemblages of buildings, landscapes, communities, activities and meanings which are constituted in the diverse experiences of their inhabitants and visitors" (1996, 908).

He introduced the concept of *place* as not just an empty empirical idea (quantifiable, or a mere container) but somewhere where people live and are familiar with. Places can have emotional attachments, can make us 'feel at home', or can cause discomfort and unease. Taun (1974) defines such reactions as *topophilia* and *topophobia*. We can belong to a place, or be trapped by it. Relph also suggests the phenomenon of *placelessness*, which is exemplified by endless modern skyscrapers and shopping malls, all superficially different and



yet rarely distinctive, built to standardised designs and expectations by contracted building workers.

### 5.7.2. Phenomenology of Landscape 1

Nogué I Font (1993) has attempted a phenomenology of landscape in the Garrotxa region in Catalonia, very different to later archaeological phenomenologies of landscape. It is a fusion of the people and the landscape they inhabit. The study is ethnographical in that it consists of a series of interviews with two sets of ten people, one a group of local farmers, the other from the Olot school of artists who specialise in painting landscapes of the Garrotxa region. Through this she hopes to find the *essences* of this landscape, the themes which are brought out by those who depend on the landscape intimately, and those who observe it intimately. This research (part of a wider project involving interviews with other inhabitants and visitors to the region including hitch-hikers) is intended to show that the meaning that individual people gave their environment is of value to the geographer.

Phenomenology of landscape is defined as “the way in which the natural geography of a site and region contribute to an atmosphere, character, and sense of place” (Seamon 1986, 20), a hermeneutical process where the interaction of people and place is important. The internal relations of properties of the landscape are important here. Whilst others have attempted to break down how such a study might be done (for instance Norbert-Shultz (1980) suggested a series of characteristic attributes of a landscape and a small group of idealised landscape types) this study looks at a specific place and its constituent parts and people.

A phenomenology of landscape should involve personal experience of that landscape, whether gained through looking at the physical attributes of that place, and thinking about how these come together to make this place unique. Nogué I Font also suggests that this is not merely a personal experience, but that we can look at the experiences of other people to think about how they view the landscape. This can be done in two ways, (a) *imaginative self-transposition*



where one can imagine being in the shoes of another person, or (b) *joint encounter and exploration* where things are experienced together and discussed (*ibid.* 166; Spiegelberg 1975). It is obvious that in an archaeological context only the first method is applicable, although archaeologists can have joint experiences (as many of my *cursus* walks illustrate – see also Tilley’s dialogue with Bender (1998)). She also mentions her need to spent time alone here, saturated in the landscape, although we never learn what her experiences are.

The interviews reveal the close relationship which farmers share with the landscape they work in, a relationship of exploitation and respect. They were ‘in touch’ with the landscape, its rhythms and cycles. They had names for all natural features, from hills and rivers, to rocks and springs, alongside the names for buildings, paths and fields. (Ruined buildings and collapsed fences are subsumed into the landscape). The texture and colour of the soil told them if it was the rich volcanic soil they so desired. Springs and streams were meeting places of old, nostalgically recalled, and still a place for a friendly chat. Colours, smells and the quality of light let them ‘feel’ the season, and they say wise simple things like, “We are lucky in this area because the rainfall is high and the soil is good” (Farmer quoted in Noguè i Font 1993, 169).

The landscape painters did not have this intimate working relationship with the land and took on more the role of the observers than participant. Most did not really have the grounded generational knowledge of the farmers, but rather were schooled in the traditions and conventions of what was expected from their paintings. Each painting showed the mountains as a backdrop and almost all included water in some form, as it is seen as integral to the feel of the landscape. Painters tended to fill a third of the canvas with sky. The painters take in the smells and sounds around them, but tend to produce idealised nostalgic views of the landscape. “I was born in the village I paint. I have pictured it from many different points of view, but you will never see that horrible factory painted on my canvas. I do not paint the factory because I do not like it. This is not its place”. (Painter quoted in Noguè i Font 1993, 175).



Nogué i Font draws common themes from her interviews, themes which define Garrotxa as a place, a unique place. The ideas of rainfall-vegetation or of cliffs-wood-fields, embody the juxtapositions of the landscape, and stripped down, they are the essences of the landscape. These are used to show that not only is it relevant to look at how other people see their landscape, but also, because farmers and painters obviously had differing perspectives (participant and observer) and yet described the same essences, that a phenomenology of landscape (in-itself) is possible.

This seems to echo with Sartre's notion of the in-itself and for-itself and the search for essences (or truths) can be traced back to Husserl. The implication seems to be that the landscape (object) is distanced from the farmers and painters (subjects) and is constant in its properties. Although these change with perspective, lighting conditions, seasons, weather and so on, this doesn't really matter because it is the same places and everybody's experiences add up to the same thing. The idealised landscape of the painters embody this attitude, and Nogué I Font concludes that it corresponds to Norbert-Schultz's 'romantic landscape' (1980). As archaeologists, are we looking for essences and truths of past landscapes and peoples? Or merely possibilities of how it could have been?

### 5.7.3. Phenomenology of landscape 2

Tilley's *The Phenomenology of Landscape* (1994) was the first detailed account of a series of monumental experiences he has shared with us, the reader. He returned to this theme several times since (1996, 1999, and in Bender 1998). I have also attempted a phenomenology of some of Scotland's *cursus* monuments (Brophy 1995, 1998b, 1999b) and other landscape interpretations with a phenomenological theme were collected together in *Neolithic Studies Group* monograph (Topping 1997). What inspired this radical new approach to Neolithic monumental studies (which is essentially what they all are)? How different and useful are they compared to previous approaches?

Tilley's phenomenological approach is very much imbedded in the philosophies of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty although unlike Thomas (1996a) he spends only



a few pages discussing these phenomenological influences rather than four chapters. He spends much of the rest of his theoretical framework discussing concepts from geography (space, place, *locales* and paths), some social theory (power and politics), and recounting ethnographic examples of the importance and meaningful nature of landscape.

Phenomenology, however, is the major point of departure for him from other studies of Neolithic monumentality, because it is about intentionality, the body and its actions, perception, and being-in-the-world. From Heidegger, he borrows the notion of *dwelling*, of people being in places from which they cannot be removed, and of creating spaces and places which reflect this. From Merleau-Ponty he takes the privileged role of the body in the world, in mediating between the subject and the object, the person and the world. The body learns from experiencing the world and this leads to our continued subjectivity. He stresses the role of the body in perception. Through these ideas, we can begin to think afresh about the relationship between social life and the natural world and ‘non-humanly created environments’ within which we are all situated. So Tilley’s phenomenological approach stems from three presuppositions - that of *dwelling*, the special and important position of the body in relation to perception and experience, and the situatedness of people in a non-human world (1994, 12-14).

*The Phenomenology of Landscape* is all about experiencing Neolithic monuments from these perspectives, looking at monuments in the south of Britain, from Wessex to southern Wales. In each chapter he recounts his experiences of these monuments, his phenomenological descriptions, and then offers an interpretation of each. These interpretations are shaped by his ethnographic examples of landscape significance (from the naming of places through generations of importance before monumentality to the idea of pathways and correct ways of travel). Of particular interest to us here is his account of the walk along the Dorset cursus (see fig. 5.1)..

He initially wanted to look at the long barrows on Cranborne Chase but soon realised that he could not ignore the cursus. To this end, he decided to walk along



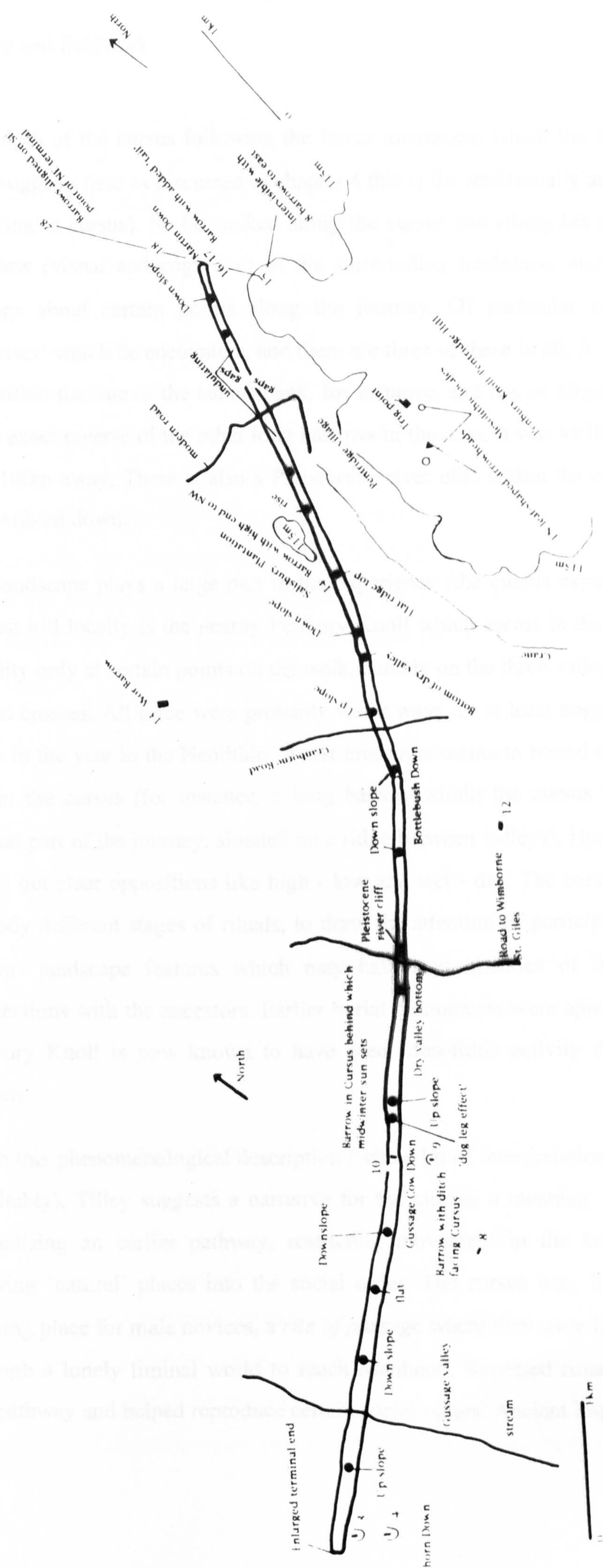


Figure 5.1 The original phenomenology of landscape -  
Tilley's walk along the Dorset cursus (after Tilley 1994,  
figs. 5.20 and 5.21).



the length of the cursus following the linear movement which the architectural form suggests (and as discussed in chapter 4 this is the traditionally accepted way of 'using' a cursus). So he walked along the cursus describing his experiences, his view (visual and cognitive) of the surrounding landscape, and related his feelings about certain points along the journey. Of particular note are the 'surprises' which he encounters, and there are three of these in all. A long barrow lies within the line of the cursus bank, for instance, and has an alignment which is the exact reverse of the other long barrows in the area. It was visible from less than 100m away. There is also a Pleistocene river cliff within the cursus which he stumbled down.

The landscape plays a large part in his experience (the cursus experience). The highest hill locally is the nearby Penbury Knoll which seems to disappear from visibility only at certain points on the walk, namely on the three valleys which the cursus crosses. All three were probably water ways, or at least boggy, at certain times in the year in the Neolithic. Water crossings seems to bound distinct areas within the cursus (for instance, a long barrow within the cursus is seen as a liminal part of the journey, situated on a ridge between valleys). Here Tilley also draws out clear oppositions like high - low and wet - dry. The cursus is seen to embody different stages of rituals, to draw the attention of participants towards various landscape features which may have had histories of their own or connections with the ancestors. Earlier burial monuments were appropriated and Penbury Knoll is now known to have seen Mesolithic activity through lithic scatters.

From this phenomenological description (with a bit of interpretation sprinkled in inevitably), Tilley suggests a narrative for the cursus, a meaning. He saw it as formalising an earlier pathway, restricting movement in the landscape, and drawing 'natural' places into the social order. The cursus was, he suggests, a training place for male novices, a *rite of passage* where they were left to stumble through a lonely liminal world to reach Manhood. Repeated rituals formalised the pathway and helped reproduce certain social orders. Ancient important places



drawn in, adding legitimacy. A control on meaning is attempted by imposing boundaries for the experience and a correct way of moving along the enclosure. This also represented a control of knowledge.

This kind of archaeology had a great influence on my undergraduate fieldwork (Brophy 1995; Brophy and MacGregor forthcoming). The narratives of some of these *cursus* walks, along with later site visits, reflect a continuing hermeneutical process that increasingly questioned Tilley's methodology. These are presented in the following chapter, and a series of experiences at Holywood village over the course of several years is presented as a hermeneutic, with each visit refining my methodology and my understanding of the sites there. Although none of the sites I walked along were anything like the scale of the Dorset *cursus*, I too came to the conclusion that the landscape was important not only in the location of the *cursus* but also in the rituals that went on within the earthwork or timber post boundaries.

Tilley has also continued to experience archaeological sites in phenomenological ways – for instance a rather bizarre dialogue with Barbara Bender (in Bender 1998) walking around the Stonehenge landscape, each with one of his young twins strapped to their backs. Rather than the individual experience of Dorset *cursus*, here we have an active dialogue, captured during the act, and presenting a fairly immediate description and interpretation of the experience. There is also a feeling of novelty and performance about this approach, with Bender noting the lack of time given to 'ask him to produce a phenomenological scenario' (*ibid.* 78).

The walk includes Stonehenge Greater *cursus*, Stonehenge, and the avenue on its route (see fig. 5.2). Similar observations are made as found in his earlier monumental experiences - changes in topography, nearby monuments referenced by, or referencing towards, the *cursus*, sky-lining and so on. Here also we have a double dialogue - between Bender and Tilley, and between the monument and topography. Here Bender teases out more of his phenomenological methodology - what he is thinking as he walks, how he views the modernity of the landscape, some of his influences and past experiences. He stresses the significance of



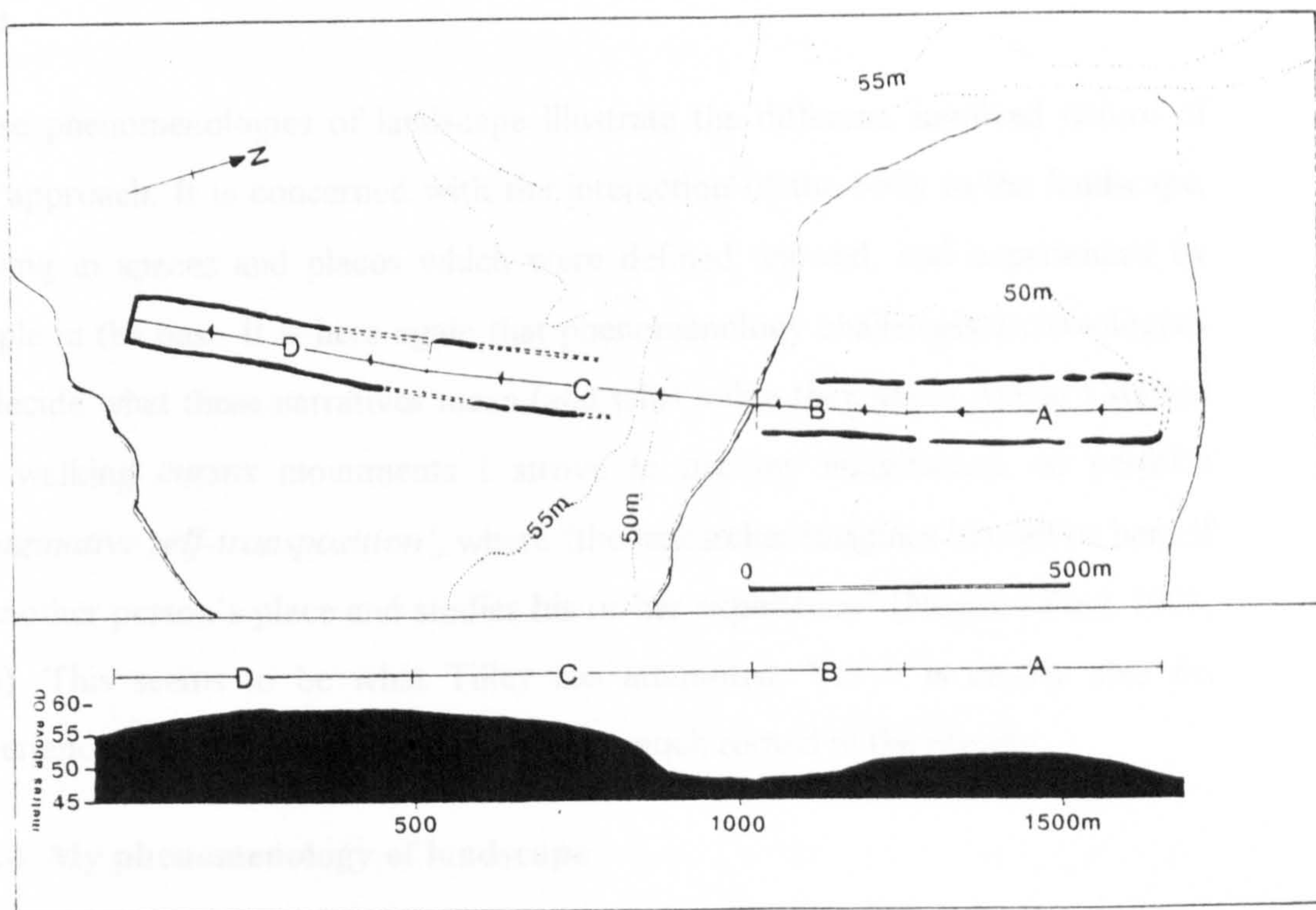
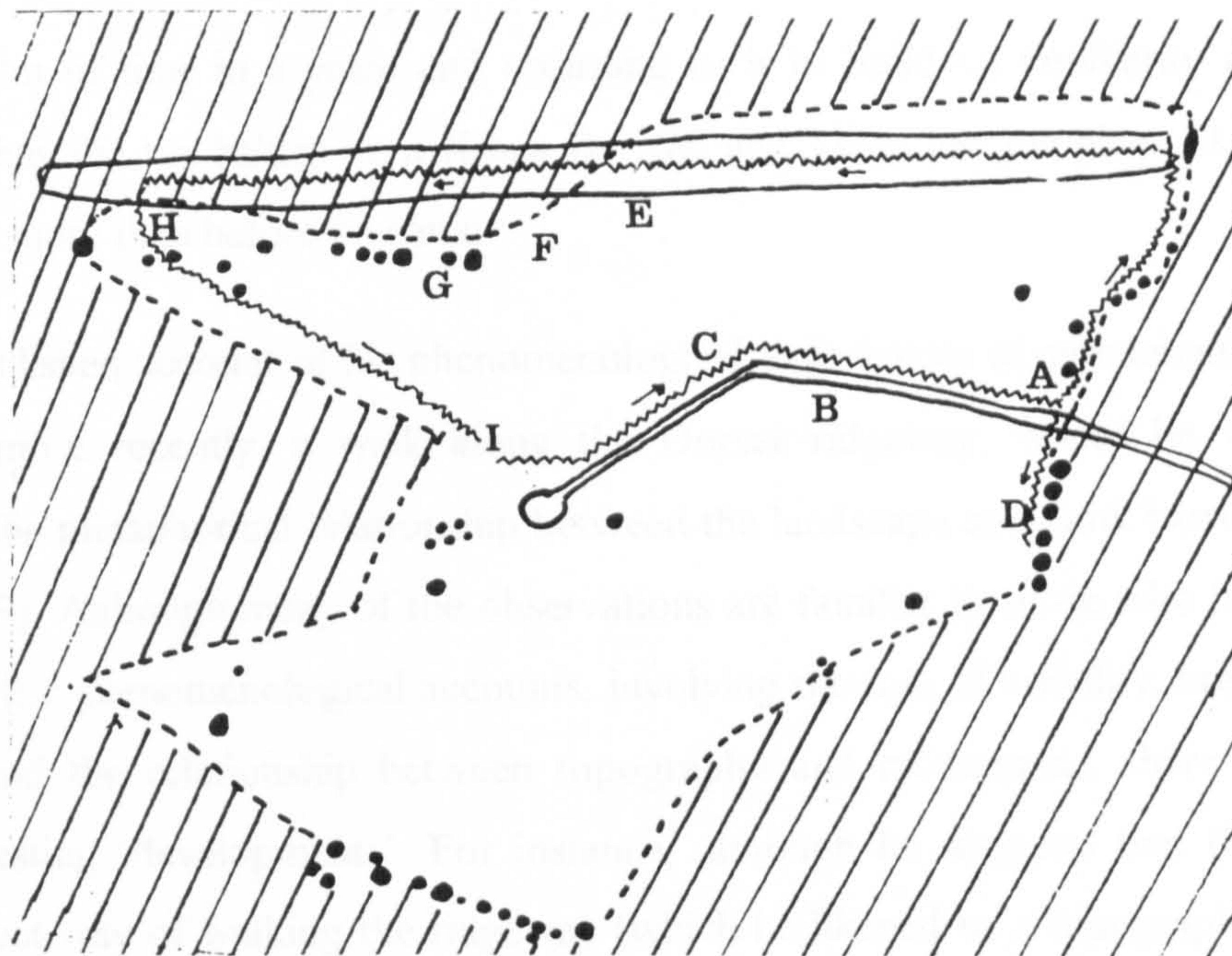


Figure 5.2 (top) Walking in the Stonehenge landscape. The zig-zag line is the path taken by Bender and Tilley. The letters are stopping places (from Bender 1993, fig.16).

Figure 5.3 (bottom) A cursus interpretation influenced by Tilley. Here, the topography of the Drayton cursus route is as important as the artificial enclosure (Barclay & Hey 1999, fig. 6.3).



spending a lot of time in a place and returning to it to build up familiarity and intimacy. They fed the babies on a Kings Barrow and Tilley left the place liking Stonehenge more than before he came.

Another published account of his phenomenological experiences at monuments is recounted more recently, a walk along the Dorset ridgeway, where he was discussing the metaphorical relationship between the landscape and bank barrows (Tilley 1999). Although many of the observations are familiar to those who have read his earlier phenomenological accounts, involving the role of visibility, breaks of slope, and the relationship between topography and monuments, there are some interesting ‘developments’. For instance, although he suggests that there was a correct way of walking the ridgeway (which he likened to a topographical *cursus*), this “does not imply that this was the only path of movement” (*ibid.* 215).

These phenomenologies of landscape illustrate the different, involved nature of this approach. It is concerned with the interaction of the body in the landscape, moving in spaces and places which were defined, viewed, and experienced by people in the past. It is here again that phenomenology challenges archaeologists to decide what these narratives mean (and what value they have). When I started out walking *cursus* monuments I strove to use my imagination, to perform ‘*imaginative self-transposition*’, where “the researcher imagines himself or herself in another person’s place and studies his or her experience” (Noguè i Font 1993, 166). This seems to be what Tilley has attempted. Yet it is clearly also *his* experiences, and *his* alone, a past now very much rooted in the present.

### 5.7.4. My phenomenology of landscape

I mentioned that my fieldwork involved a degree of critique of Tilley’s and a refining of my own methodology. Before moving on to those stories of my *cursus* experiences, I want to outline four important areas of a phenomenological fieldwork method, taking in the time before, during and after being in the field. These deliberately echo Merleau-Ponty’s ideas of the temporality of action. To



abstract and simplify his ideas, action encapsulates the past (our life experiences, the pre-reflective knowledge of the body), the present (what I am doing now), and the future (a project, even a projected outcome). Tilley did not really reflect on what he was doing in the field, and although the account is purely subjective, it is rather abstracted and impersonal. I hope to stress what *I* bring to these experiences, why they are mine and not yours, but yet are still archaeologically significant.

Phenomenological description on its own is not enough. As will all activities, the act of walking along a cursus (or moving within any prehistoric place) is not merely grounded in the present. It is based on past experiences and is focused on future goals (the interpretation, the research, the thesis). The move from experience to expression (the paradigm shift in the career of phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur (Ihde 1971)) is perhaps the most important stage to archaeologists. As soon as we do something it is gone, never to be repeated in exactly that way ever again (this is not a laboratory). After an excavation the site is gone, the digging is over. We are left with a series of written records, drawings, photographs, samples and material culture. And so after visiting an archaeological site we are left only with reflection and description. The interpretations we give are of this description, a re-telling of an event in the written text, spoken word, photographic record, or even a video. The interpretation of such texts, as post-modernism has been quick to realise, is open to multiple readings (Tilley 1990, 1991; Thomas 1991).

*Pre-phenomenology* What shapes our interpretations of our descriptions of our experiences? There are our pre-conceptions, attitudes, prejudices and knowledge. These stems from our roles in society and who we are. There are also the pre-reflective ways of meeting the world which Merleau-Ponty argued for (the *lived-body*), which has a pre-understanding of how to move and act in the world and in social situations. We can be lost-in-coping (Heidegger 1962).

As archaeologists we have, when we enter the field, a body of knowledge which is, in effect, a modern reconstruction of the past. This is the so-called



archaeological record. As a critique of Tilley's experiential phenomenology, I want to look here at what comes before the experience of the site itself. There are things which should be acknowledged and yet were never, at least explicitly, stated by Tilley. Also, I want to argue that rather than trying to perform some kind of *epoché* as advocated by MacGregor (in Brophy & MacGregor forthcoming), whereby all influences would be banished from our minds, we should acknowledge our prior knowledge and understand how it shapes our experiences and interpretations.

When we begin to think about an archaeological problem, we are entering a hermeneutic circle (or spiral) (fig. 5.4). By the time we have stepped out of the landrover and put on our walking boots we are already in this circle, although we would usually regard the physical act of entering the site or landscape as our point of entry. Yet it is clear that our pre-conceptions and motivations must shape the way we act.

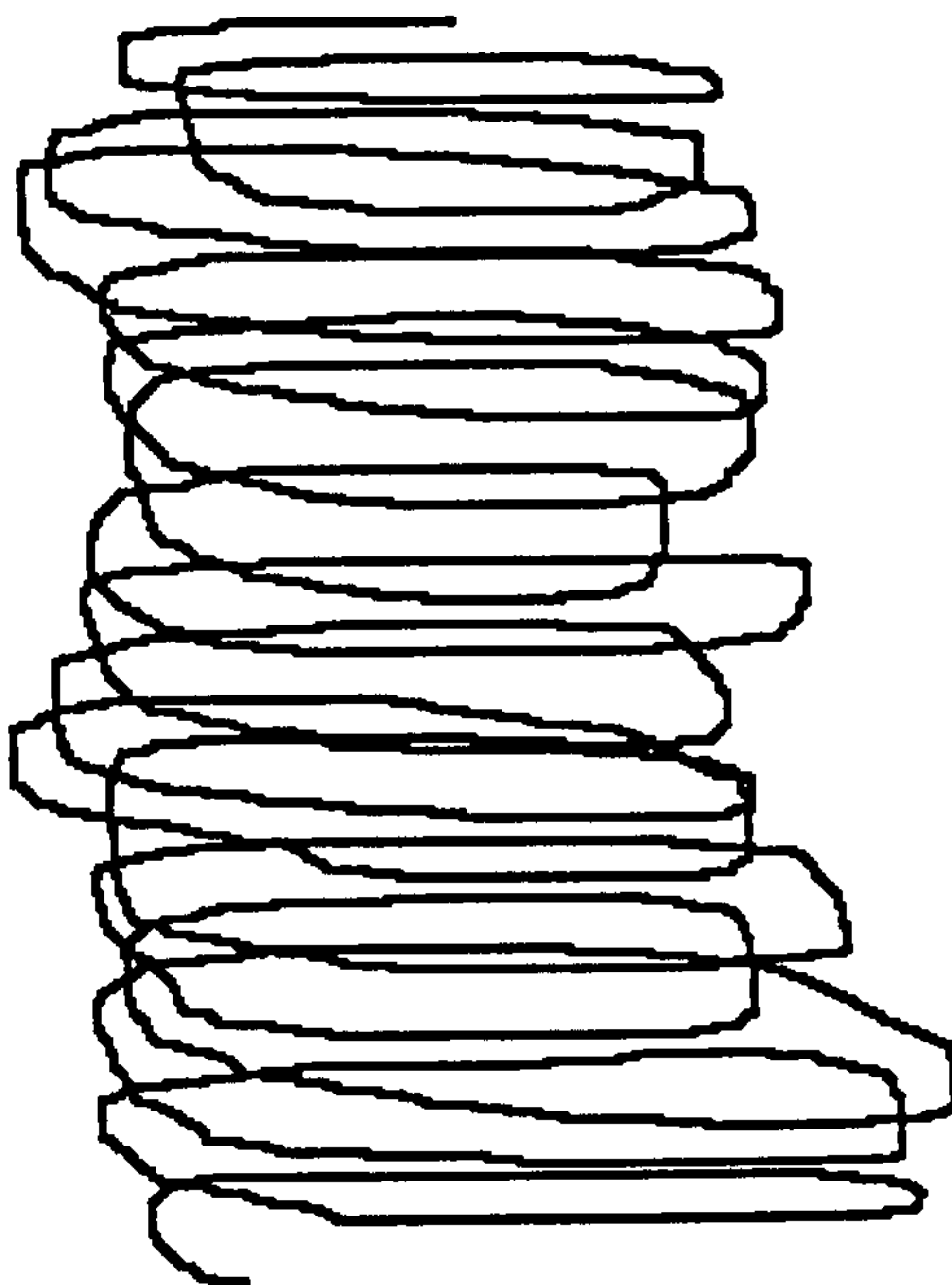
Hodder (1992) recounts his excavations at Haddenham causewayed enclosure in the form of an hermeneutic spiral, returning back again to previous work, changing theories and ideas according to newly revealed information and so entering into a kind of dialogue with the site. Even before the excavation began, he reflects much later, he carried a series of pre-suppositions regarding the nature of the site and the social world it existed in (and for). This was based on his knowledge as an archaeologist of site morphology, previous excavations and social theory of Neolithic Britain. Instead of ignoring this confession of far from objective practice he retrospectively interpreted the site and importantly used the artefacts and ecofacts to contextualise his pre-suppositions. "So that we do not simply take the themes of ritual, social action and so on for granted, we needed to remain sensitive to the particular contextual data" (*ibid.* 215).

So the interpretation of the excavation (or experience) involved a dialogue between theory and data, shaped by the initially acknowledged presuppositions. Hodder does not suggest that we ignore this 'baggage'. Instead, through using pre-suppositions, excavation results and interpretations as the contextual whole



**Phenomenology &  
The hermeneutic  
spiral**

**everything that  
comes before  
influences  
everything after**

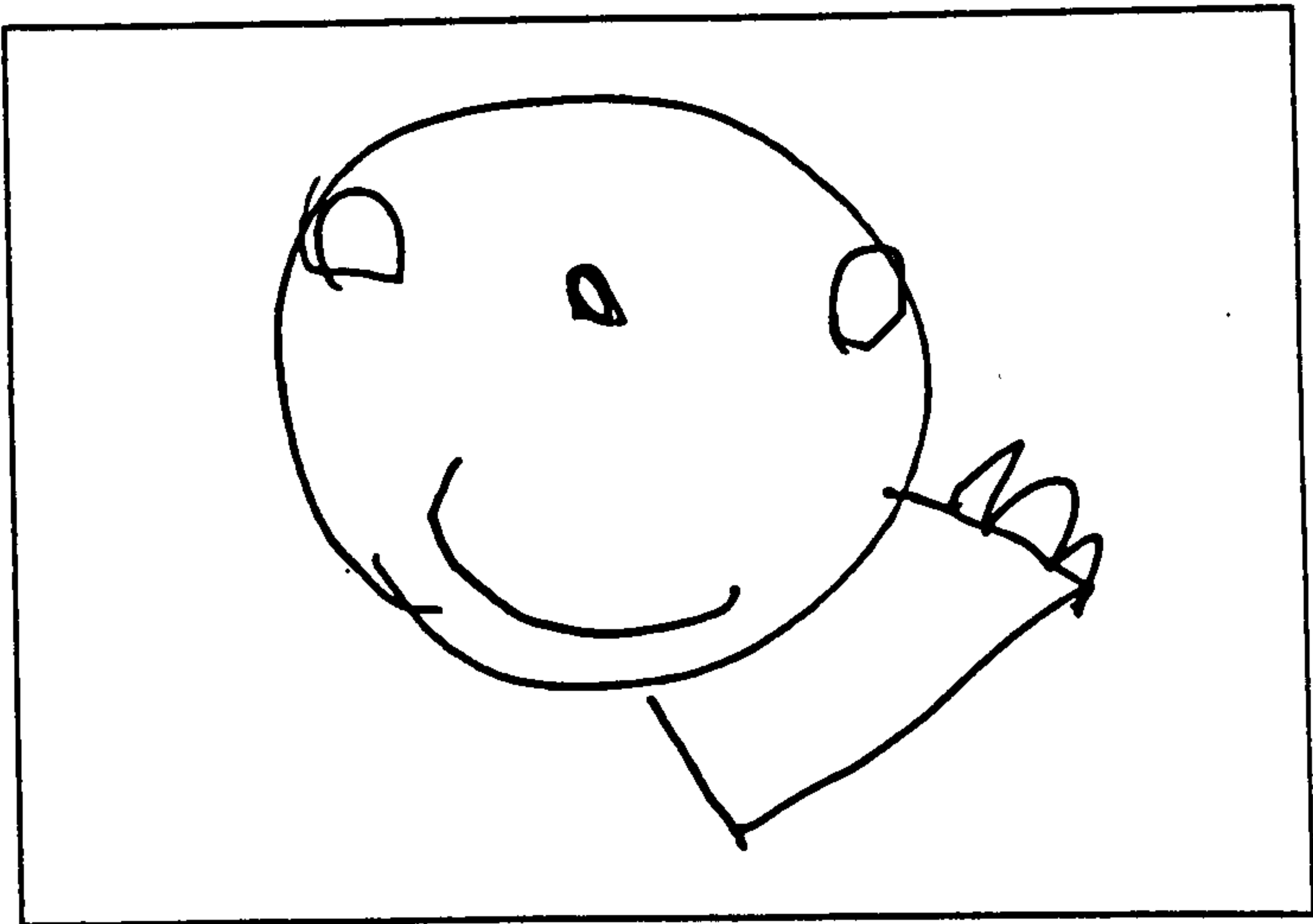


**Interpretation**

**Phenomenological  
Description**

**Experience**

**Pre-phenomenology**



*"Thinking II"*

Figure 5.4 (top) The hermeneutic spiral.  
Figure 5.5 (bottom) Karlsson suggests we think about  
archaeological thinking (from Karlsson 1997, pg.195).



of the excavation he believes that we can escape our assumptions and pre-conceived solutions and find more than what we expected to find, or wanted to find.

The role of phenomenological description and excavation will be returned to in more depth in later chapters. Hodder after all hasn't really done a phenomenological excavation but a theoretically informed one. However, as he argues, all archaeological field work has some degree of 'background knowledge' (*ibid.* 213). For instance, it would be fair to say that if you intend to tackle an archaeological problem (the *cursus* problem) that a few assumptions are being made in the stating of the problem itself. All archaeological work involves such assumptions, even at a basic pre-reflective level. "To interpret means to use one's own preconceptions so that the meaning of the text can really be made to speak for us" (Tilley 1991, 116).

*The experience* The experience itself is fleeting, captured in the present, only by a description which places it in the past. As soon as it happens it is gone.

*Phenomenological description* How do we describe these moments? We have our notebooks full of scrawled notes (fig. 6.2), a description of what happened when we visited a site. We wrote it down as it happened although the initial perception of something interesting could never coincide with the writing down. Our photographs are pictorial records of these moments where we decide what to record and where to point the camera. Our typical recording methods cannot capture the experience of walking along a *cursus* monument, or entering a stone circle, or climbing to a hilltop enclosure. These are censored accounts which inevitably collect together a series of moments, rather than a fluid journey. Our photographs are impersonal, a stop-start record of views and places. Our words describe closely the feelings involved, what we saw, what this may have meant to us at the time, perhaps even the thoughts of others on the same walk. But they concentrate on the photogenic moment where significant things happened. These methods offer a best-of experience and cannot capture the mundanity of parts of



the experience. The reader almost certainly does not want these to be captured of course.

Can we record in more immediate ways? Although I have not used a camcorder this would certainly be a way of capturing a walk much better than words could and in a less disjointed fashion than stills. The camcorder offers immediacy, the experience played back, rewound, paused and probably fast-forwarded through the boring bits. Yet it is still a restricted version of the real thing. Whilst it picks up images and sounds as they happen there are limits to where we can point the lens and how wide an angle is recorded. These are still the views of the person having the experience, the person who has editorial control. There is something rather detached about constantly viewing the world through a camcorder.

I like using a dictaphone to talk about sites in the field. Ideas and observations can be recorded with more immediacy and detail than with pad and pencil. Dialogues can be captured and there is a sense of reality about the sound of someone recording an exciting observation with a hint of excitement in the voice. This is a personal record as it happens with the words replaced by silence at times or gusts of wind.

These are all ways of recording and describing the experience and this is the phenomenology. There is no real need for immediacy I suppose because this is something we can never have. At excavations we write reports based on written or photographic records, not the actual actions themselves, or the moment. Walking along a *cursus* is the present and everything else is going to be in the future, influenced by the past.

### *Post-phenomenology. The interpretation.*

As I stated earlier, phenomenological description on its own is not enough. The factors which help shape our experiences also help to build our interpretations. Tilley (1994) based the interpretations of his experiences at the Dorset *cursus* on a series of ethnographic examples (out-lined earlier in his book) and some ideas from social theory. There is no fixed interpretation of the past, no correct



answers, only ambiguity. Later I will outline a series of thoughts about the meanings of *cursus* monuments and these will neither attempt to explain all sites at once and some sites may have several possible interpretations. We must realise that just as if we look at the same tree everyday it will never appear to us as exactly the same because of light, time of year, how we feel, our angle of approach. Yet it is not enough to say that it is still the same tree and not think about why it appears as it does. Our interpretations of the phenomenological experience and description should not merely produce a fixed image of a *cursus*, a template, but rather a series of possibilities.

### 5.8. Conclusion

This chapter has included a lot of philosophy and not much archaeology. I hope that I will be able to show the value of Merleau-Ponty's work throughout the remainder of the volume. This will include using his dialectical approach to critique previous archaeological methods like excavation. I will also think about the inter-relatedness of colour, reflection, light, material and monuments. I will use the archaeological site as the point where the *lived-world* and the body become apparent, and constantly stress the role of ambiguity and temporality of experience and of monuments.

This is not, I hope, another post-processual volume where a series of deeply philosophical chapters in the opening section are followed by chapter on archaeology which bear little or no relevance to one another. Thomas (1996a) presents four chapters on Heidegger's philosophy and then goes on to look at a series of archaeological problems. These two halves of the book seem un-related sadly and have become, for me, a metaphor for the theory - practice gap which has developed over the last twenty years. As I suggested in chapter 1 there is a feeling that if interpretative archaeologies are to have any influence outwith academia in archaeology there must be a concern with everyday practice in the present, not just the past. I hope that in this thesis I will show this concern. This will begin with the sites themselves.



## 6. Cursus stories

### 6.1. My stories

Archaeologists have always experienced their sites. The vast majority have not done so from within a conscious phenomenological framework but nevertheless they have experienced phenomena through the senses. The case for a phenomenological archaeology has been made in the previous chapter and there I also outlined Tilley's walk along the Dorset cursus, a journey where he encountered the ploughed away ruins of an enormous enclosure, millennia old (1994). What I want to do here is to work through similar fieldwork but reflect more closely on what I have been doing, from the preconceptions which shape fieldwork to the role of the present in shaping my experiences of the past. My stories, narrative accounts of walks I have made along *cursus* monuments from November 1994 to July 1999 are vastly effected and constrained by the trappings of modernity, from the mildly annoying (low hedges blocking visibility) to the rather treacherous (busy main roads). A number of sites appear to be bisected by busy roads or once-busy rail lines (the Cleaven Dyke, Milton of Guthrie, Holywood 1, Balneaves Cottage and Drybridge to name five).

The walks have been viewed by disinterested grazing cattle, sheep and horses. I have been barked at by dogs, my fleece jacket chewed by cows. Farmers have been rather bemused that I would want to visit a field with apparently nothing in them other than crops ('but I've farmed there for sixty years and never seen anything...'). And yet to me there has been something. When I look to my sides I see earthen banks of my height blocking views of the outside world, or a line of huge timbers sunlight slitting through. These cursus stories are in a sense my recreations of cursus monuments now long gone.

The stories below are presented in chronological order. They are also placed within their context, with an attempt to outline the motivations for some of the journeys to *cursus* monuments, and even what I expected to find. Some of the earlier experiences draw on my undergraduate research (Brophy 1995). Finally, I



will present a more detailed series of experiences at a few other sites. One is the Hollywood complex which, for me, encapsulates all that is right and wrong about my attempts at an imaginative, involved archaeology of Scotland's *cursus* monuments. In it, I enter a hermeneutic circle and interpret and re-interpret my experiences. More intimate, interactive experiences are also recounted through two short seasons of excavations at Milton of Rattray.

Each walk or experience is preceded by the name which we give each place, the dates of the experience, and the names of anybody else who participated in the fieldwork. These are mostly my own observations but inevitably the dialogues which continued throughout the walk, and sometimes in the car driving home, have helped clarify my thoughts and so this work is partly indebted to them.

### **6.2. Cavens. November 1994. A walk with Dougie Gaylor.**

My first visit to Cavens was unsuccessful with the weather wet and foggy obscuring the hills to the north. A second visit the following day was accompanied by bright sunshine. This *cursus* had an unusual location as it is on higher ground on a slope with a gradient of about 10%. As part of weekend trip to Dumfries, this site was visited twice in all for my undergraduate dissertation. It was only the second *cursus* I had walked along (after Hollywood 1, recounted later in the chapter) and its location struck me as interesting and different.

The most obvious thing I noticed, even before walking along the *cursus*, was that it seemed to ignore the topography, running diagonally across the slope rather than straight up it.

I stood within the south end of the *cursus* with the hill of Criffel lying ahead of me, dominating the horizon to the north virtually standing alone against the skyline (plate 6.1). It appeared very 'symmetrical' in profile. By way of contrast, the land to the south ran away, sloping downhill all the way to the Solway Firth.





Plate 6.1 (top) Looking among the line of Cavens towards Criffel hill.

Plate 6.2 (bottom) Curriestanes. Dougie and I were accompanied on our walk along this *cursus* by a herd of cows.



I suggested at the time (Brophy 1995) that the *cursus* cut across the slope because it was built to align (or closely mis-align) with the top of Criffel. I also discussed the experience of walking *uphill* within the *cursus* attention focused on the hill. "It would have been a spectacular backdrop to any activity taking place in the terminal area, for those watching from downhill. After walking in this landscape the power of the location is obvious" (*ibid.* 91).

My enthusiasm for this site is clear because, coming straight after my first *cursus* experience, it was becoming possible that the physical landscape was being exploited in *cursus* construction and usage. For what end I was still unsure but it seemed to be all about exaggerating the spectacle of certain places, through placing terminals on promontories (Holywood) or providing a theatrical backdrop (Criffel at Cavens). The account now seems idealised with the monument placed in a pivotal place in the landscape, between the hill and the coast, and yet a later visit to speak to the farmer suggested that it was not so clear cut and rather more subtle.

### **6.3. Curriestanes. November 1994. A walk with Dougie Gaylor.**

My third experience that weekend was in the rather under-whelming, but wonderfully named site at Curriestanes. We walked along this *cursus* followed by a small herd of cows every step of the way (plate 6.2).

### **6.4. Broich. January 1995. A walk**

I visited the wide *cursus* at Broich before the discovery of the now known northern half (shown in fig. 3.17). Then, as now, I was particularly interested in the relationship this site had with Bennybeg, the pit-defined enclosure which it aligns on to the south on the other side of the River Earn.

The experience began unpromisingly with a tumble over the fence ending in me rolling down into the bottom of a natural depression. My walk, however, began to the north at a field boundary where the site was then thought to end. Looking south along the line of the *cursus*, towards the tree line where the cropmark and



the river terrace run out, the route along the monument appeared flat and regular. Nothing could be seen beyond the trees. As I walked southwards, the landscape ahead began to look less and less flat. All the time I was trying to visualise the banks of the monument on either side of me, which would have been up to 50m away to my left and right, hardly an enclosure which demanded linear movement.

Two natural depressions came into view as I neared the tree-line. One, on my left, was a circular hollow which the *cursus* ditch passed through the west side of. The other on my right, more of a depression leading down to a slightly lower terrace, lay mostly within the line of the monument. The level ridge between these features is about 15m wide 'narrowing' the *cursus* from 100m to this very rapidly (plate 6.3). Walking between the depressions, I soon reached the physical end of the terrace and presumably the *cursus* which involved climbing a fence (again) and peering through the trees to a dominant and impressive view over the flood plain of the Earn below (plate 6.4). The location of Bennybeg was visible as well.

I walked down into the depressions, which were relatively deep. The eastern hollow was roughly circular in shape and, from within it, nothing could be seen in any direction except a grassy horizon, and some of the landscape the south. From the western depression the view was a little better to the south and west but to the north, only a few hill-tops could be seen. Neither allowed a view up onto the *cursus* itself and views would have been further restricted by the earthworks. Both low places did allow views of the Earn or its valley.

By now, I was expectant every time I arrived at a *cursus* wondering if the landscape was being exploited and how. Broich really excited me, even if I did read the map slightly inaccurately and thought that the monument passed symmetrically between the depressions, the bank and ditch bisecting each. However, the strange undulating nature of this place make it an unusual choice for such an enclosure, which seems in effect to ignore the topography. The cropmarks of the ditch continue regardless, except for a break filled with a pit-





Plate 6.3 (top) Looking across the line of Broich from the north-west. The two depressions or hollows, and the narrow strip of land between are directly beneath the number 1.

Plate 6.4 (bottom) View from the terminal area of Broich through the tress to the River earn and its flood plain.



circle. Yet it exploits the landscape at the terminal, with the sudden unexpected drop. At the time I made great comparison with Tilley's *cursus* walk calling the topographical variations here surprises and suggesting that south was the correct way to walk along the monument (Brophy 1995, 132).

#### **6.5. Balneaves Cottage. January 1995. A walk.**

A visit to a pit-defined site near the village of Friockheim. The site lies within a cropmark complex which is partially eaten into by noisy gravel quarrying. The walk along this site was fairly level with the impression of a rise at one end (which the *cursus* presumably did not run up) and a drop at the other (there is no cropmark evidence for its continuation off the terrace here). It straddles the terrace overlooking the Lunan Water, although the river itself is not visible. It was certainly not intervisible with the location of nearby Douglasmuir or Milton of Guthrie.

#### **6.6. The Cleaven Dyke. January 1995. A walk.**

The Cleaven Dyke was a site I had read excavation reports of and I was still unsure whether it should be classed a *cursus* or a bank barrow. My expectations were dominated by the excitement of seeing a *cursus* rather than imagining one, although I was concerned that the woodland would make observations of the wider landscape impossible. After all, most *cursus* sites seemed to control vision inwards whilst the Dyke's plan central rather than enclosing bank suggested more outward looking architecture. Modernity had shut it away in a wooden cocoon. And yet as I walked, I imagined that I was seeing what Neolithic people saw (the same hills and rivers and *cursus*) and was in some way sharing their experience.

It runs through forestry and fields near the village of Meikleour, south of Blairgowrie. Even more than the cropmark sites, to experience this site is to both be transported back to the Neolithic but also to be trapped in the modern world. It both frees the mind and yet constrains. It is more than the archaeological record -



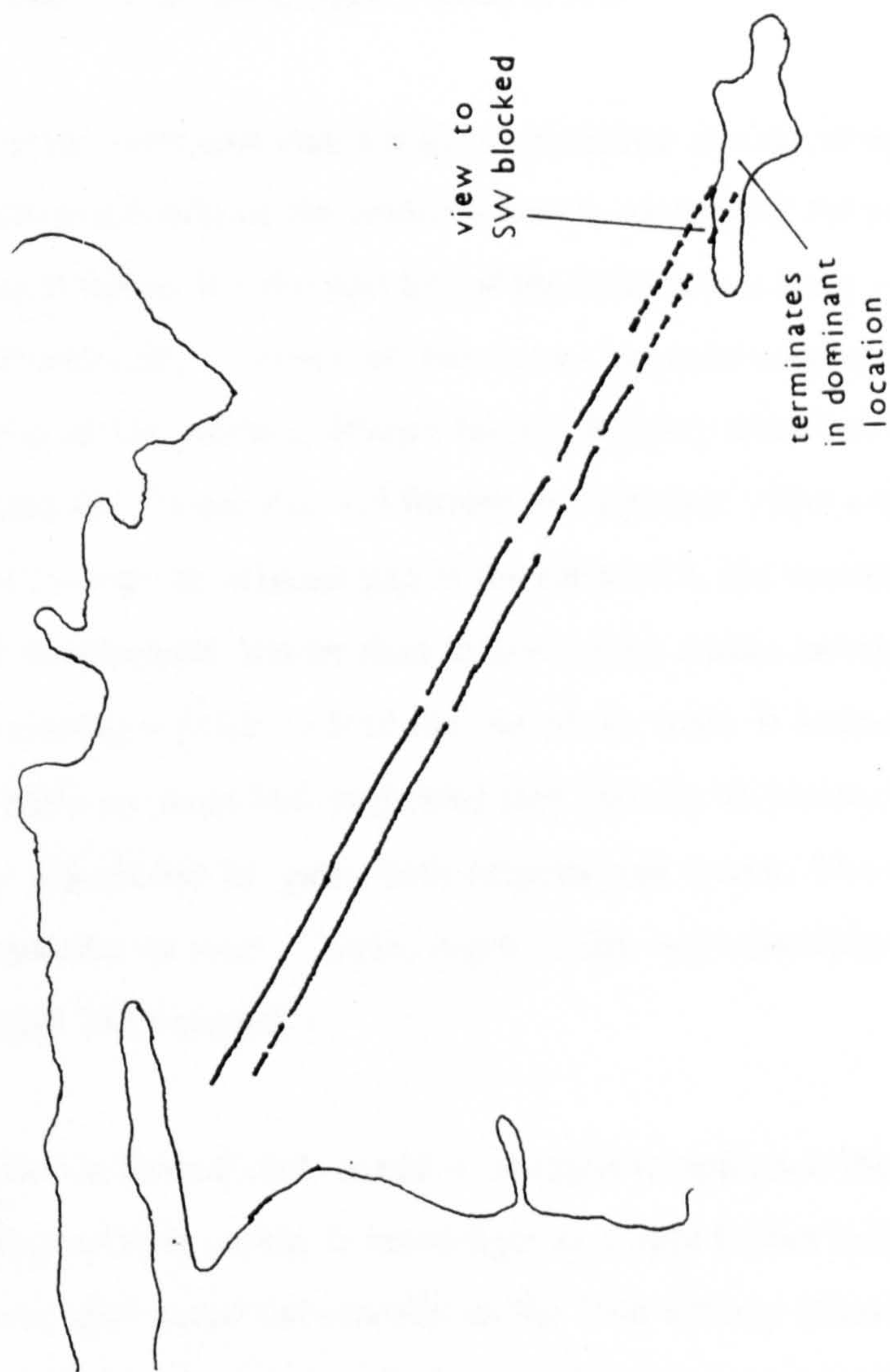


Figure 6.1 Observations from my undergraduate fieldwork at the Cleaven Dyke (from Brophy 1995, fig.39).



it inspires involvement and emotion. Whilst marvelling at the scale of the earthwork, I am also saddened by the continued destruction by forestry and rabbits. What does this site mean to those who drive their Landrovers across roughly hewn holes through the central mound? Is it heritage or hindrance? Do they even know what it is, or how old? When was the last time when anybody really *knew* what it was? What does it mean to me?

I walked from the north-east end, a massive 'terminal' mound, along a path which runs along the south side of the central mound, convenient for joggers and dog walkers. I could follow the rise and fall of the level of the bank as if it consisted of a series of segments. A stretch of the *cursus* has been cleared of woodland to the exterior lip of the defining ditches falsely defining whatever this monument was, re-making the *cursus*. Rig and furrow run across it. After crossing the A93, which passes through an original gap in the earthwork, the woodland was denser and the path disappeared. Rather than following the *cursus* merely to experience it, it was becoming a guide to lead me out of the trees. It seems erratic, not as perfectly straight as plans had suggested (see Barclay & Maxwell 1998) and is occasionally punctuated by gaps, both original and recent. The ditch and bank changed constantly in scale. Height, depth, width and orientation became fluid, not the constant I had expected.

From this chaotic liminal dark world, I emerged to approach the south-east end ploughed away and yet visible to my delight as a light brown soilmark where the central mound once stood (as recently as the 19th century (Barclay & Maxwell 1998)). Here, the *cursus* gently climbs uphill towards a natural knoll, marked now by a few trees and a road. Approaching it, the land rose to my south in a long low spur merging into the knoll. The central mound here would have meant that this outward looking monument, for its last tens of metres, was totally enclosed on the south side between bank and spur focusing vision and movement ahead. Reaching the top meant expansive views over the River Isla valley from the south-east terminal area. A few knolls ahead included a long barrow, Herald Hill. Walking along the 2km length of the *cursus* took less than half an hour.

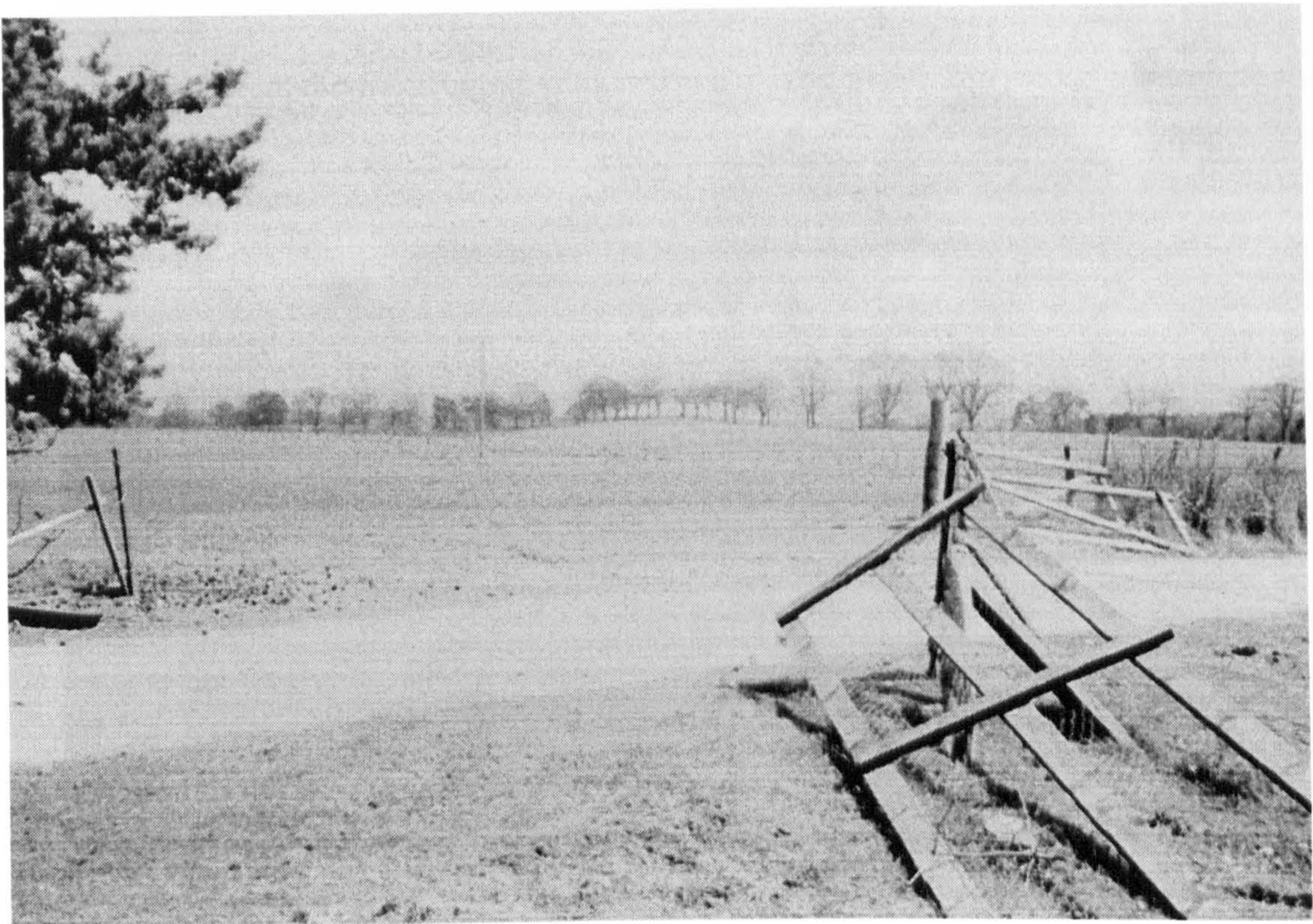
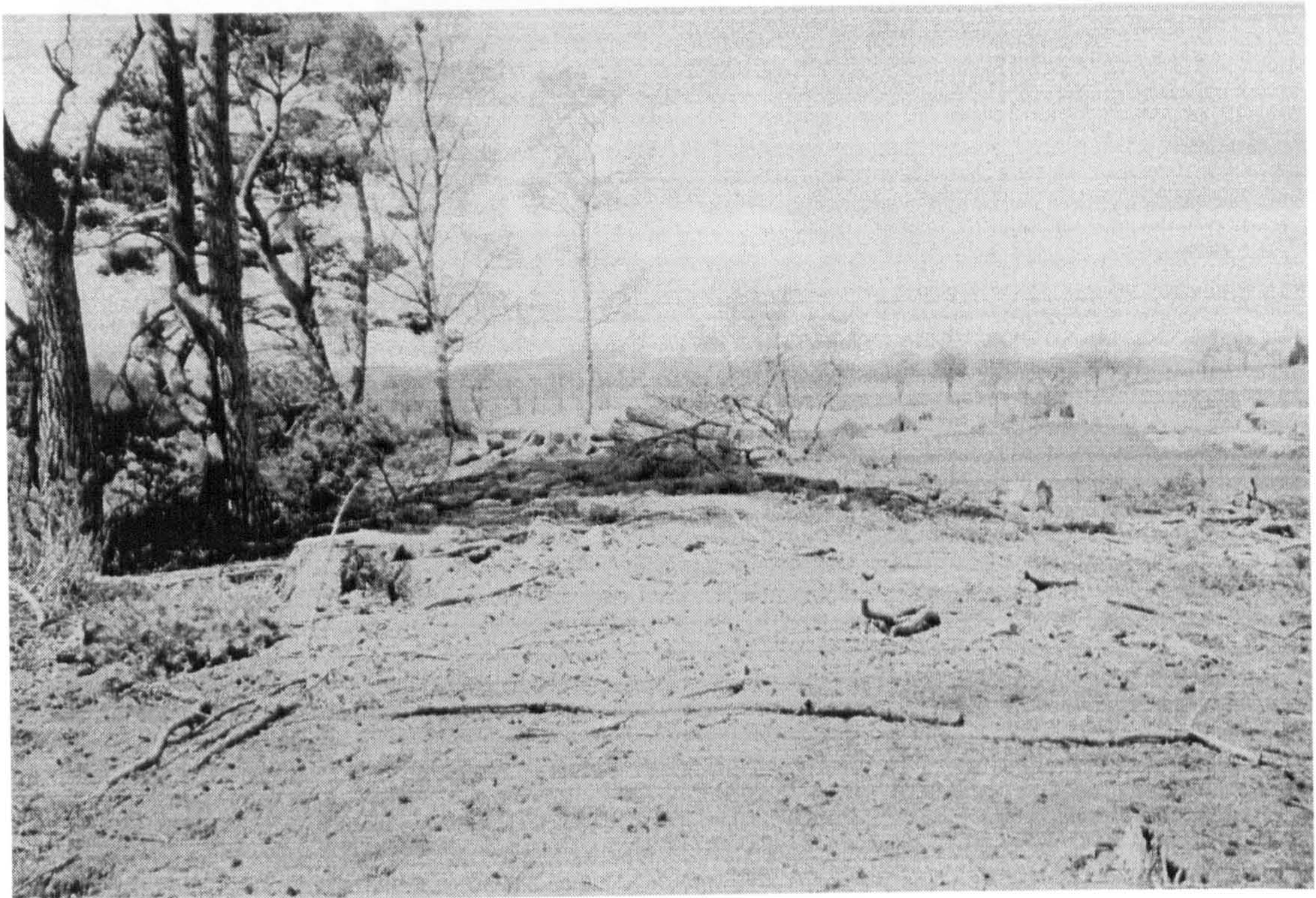


The return walk reversed the order of cropmark into dense forestry to clearer woodland. For a time I walked along the top of the mound, dipping down between segments and changing from side to side. If one is so inclined, the binary oppositions possible when taking a central route are interesting - left and right, high and low, ditch and bank. (When walking the other way my left and right were on different sides).

In the cleared section I can see filled in excavation trenches from Barclay and Maxwell's first excavations here (1993). Fire gaps in the forestry give hints of the lie of the land to the south, falling away to the Tay and its floodplain. Approaching the tree shrouded north-west terminal, I am struck by how massive it is compared to the rest of the bank. It flattens and widens and then stops abruptly, fenced in with the trees. The field ahead is ploughed and brown and dull, sloping away to a stream valley a few hundred metres away. A rounded hill-top ahead seems to be on the line of the Dyke.

I have been back many times to the Cleaven Dyke since then but as always the excitement of a first visit and walk can never be re-captured. On other visits I have repeated that walk with colleagues and friends. I have excavated on the site with Barclay and Maxwell (the 1995 season) and even more closely experienced the bank that we longitudinally sectioned. Sweating and labouring with barrows of soil from this mound, taking it apart as others once laboured to create. Yet the skill of the JCB driver meant that we could watch it once again being moulded. During this excavation Gordon Maxwell walked with me along the ditches for several hours and pointed out all of the breaks and mis-alignments he had noticed in a feature I presumed was regular and unbroken. During the contour survey (Barclay & Maxwell 1999) every inch of the Dyke was walked over, feeling for breaks in slope and the edges of ditches.





*Plate 6.5 (top)* Walking towards the north-west terminal of the Cleaven Dyke along the central mound. The Hill of Lethendy is visible in the centre of the photograph.

*Plate 6.6 (top)* Standing at the end of the earthwork and looking south-eastwards along the location of the cropmark section. The Cleaven Dyke terminates on the knoll in the centre of the photograph.





Plate 6.7 (top) Walking along the Cleaven Dyke. The central mound is on the left of the photograph.  
 Plate 6.8 (bottom) Approaching the south-east terminal of the Cleaven Dyke, which sits on the knoll in the centre of the photograph.



The north-west end has been cleared of woodland now. Great gouges have been taken from the mound by tree roots and rabbit warrens. It is now clear that the cursus bends slightly to the left as you approach the massive terminal, the area now classed as a long mound and a round mound (Barclay & Maxwell 1998), and so slightly mis-aligns with the un-named hill I earlier mentioned. From the top of this hill, the cursus creates an exaggerated cropmark effect in the woodland with a line of raised trees and clearances cutting through the plantation. From here it surely would have been visible and the Dyke - unlike today - may have been all about visibility, and being visible, throughout the unknown period of its construction.

#### **6.7. Holm. January 1996. A short walk.**

At this site, on a drizzly afternoon, I locked myself out of the car. I used the transcription to follow the line of the parallel pit-alignments, but my attention was drawn to the east towards the sweeping view over the River Nith and its widening flood plain. Looking up and down the monument itself was surely not as interesting as the view glimpsed between the posts to the side (plate 6.9).

#### **6.8. Eskdalemuir. Tom's Knowe. September 1996. With Andrew Baines.**

We visited this site on a sunny early autumn day and concentrated on looking at the Tom's Knowe terminal. I approached these monuments with a degree of scepticism as the report of the RCAHMS (1992) had not convinced me that this monument could really be described as cursiform. This is a phrase I took to mean a monument that looks like a cursus but has various morphological variations. In terms of the location (running down and up opposite valley sides) and physical form (ditches closely flanking a central mound) this seemed to be a different kind of monument entirely. However, there are precedents for both these characteristics at various cursus sites. Rudston A to C run across the Gypsy race valley (Dymond 1966) and the central mound at Scorton may have inhabited most of the interior area of that cursus (Topping 1982). I visited the site with the





Plate 6.9 (top) The view from the area of *Holm cursus*.  
Looking east across the Nith and its valley.

Plate 6.10 (bottom) Tom's Knowe. The terminal viewed from  
the north-west.



realisation that I could still visit this site and experience it on the ground regardless of what archaeologists might classify it as.

We walked towards the Tom's Knowe terminal from the west, approaching it from slightly downhill. The terminal mound itself did look very similar to a chambered cairn (oval shaped, steep sided and covered in grass - see plate 6.10). It sat adjacent to a dry stone wall marking the edge of a forestry plantation. Walking around it, it was difficult to tell exactly where the artificial mound met the natural topography as it sits on a low mound. A flat promontory stretched to the south and west of the terminal with good views over the hills and moors beyond, although not back towards the White Esk valley. At the time I saw this flat area as a forecourt where ritual activities associated with the barrow took place.

The long mound stretched away from the terminal and ran beneath the wall into the trees. Again, there was no clear indication on the surface of where one began and the other ended, or if they were part of a unitary construction. Beyond the wall, the mound was almost impossible to follow as it disappeared into the woodland ground vegetation and dense trees. It ran over a sharp break in slope and headed more steeply downhill before becoming impossible to trace or walk along. On the other side of the woodland it is barely apparent in a very steep field, running down to the valley floor and beneath some farm buildings.

Looking across the valley to Lamb Knowe, the hillside where it is located was clearly visible across the valley, although we could not pick out the mound itself. We visited briefly having to cross a river in our bare feet as the fording point was flooded, and found the mound running up the hillside, terminating in an unspectacular point part way up the hill. I was still not convinced that this was the kind of site that people walked along and concentrated instead on looking at the form of the site itself and its similarity to a series of low natural mounds on the same hillside.



### ① Walking East

Start on low plateau and walk down slope to base of 'drop' which appears dramatic than actually is. Appears downhill all the way.

Flattens out near end. View at end lost to trees, hump + road.

View of river from here uncertain - poss. only valley visible - depends on full extent of cursus. Probably line down to Preston Mill, river would have been visible from any termination this far of area (mound Churn is on direct).

River type - fairly wide. Probably could not be seen from near visible end of cursus - possibly not even location of river. Termination may have been different.

### ② Walking West

View not shown again low area on curve, and climb towards far extent.

View beyond blocked by houses. To N of far E extent, land drops away, before rising again out of flood plain.

Curse would have been visible from the ridge to W. although they aren't in line.

N. Benwick rock visible from higher areas in valley, but not visible from N of cursus however.

Figure 6.2 Notes taken at Drylawhill (see plates 6.11-.14; and for a plan, figure 3.8). These were taken before the interpretation of Preston mains as a possible extension to this cursus.





*Plate 6.11 (top)* Walking along Drylawhill *cursus*. This view was taken from the known western extent of the site, looking east.  
*Plate 6.12 (bottom)* After a few minutes walking through the crops, the half-way point of the enclosure was reached.

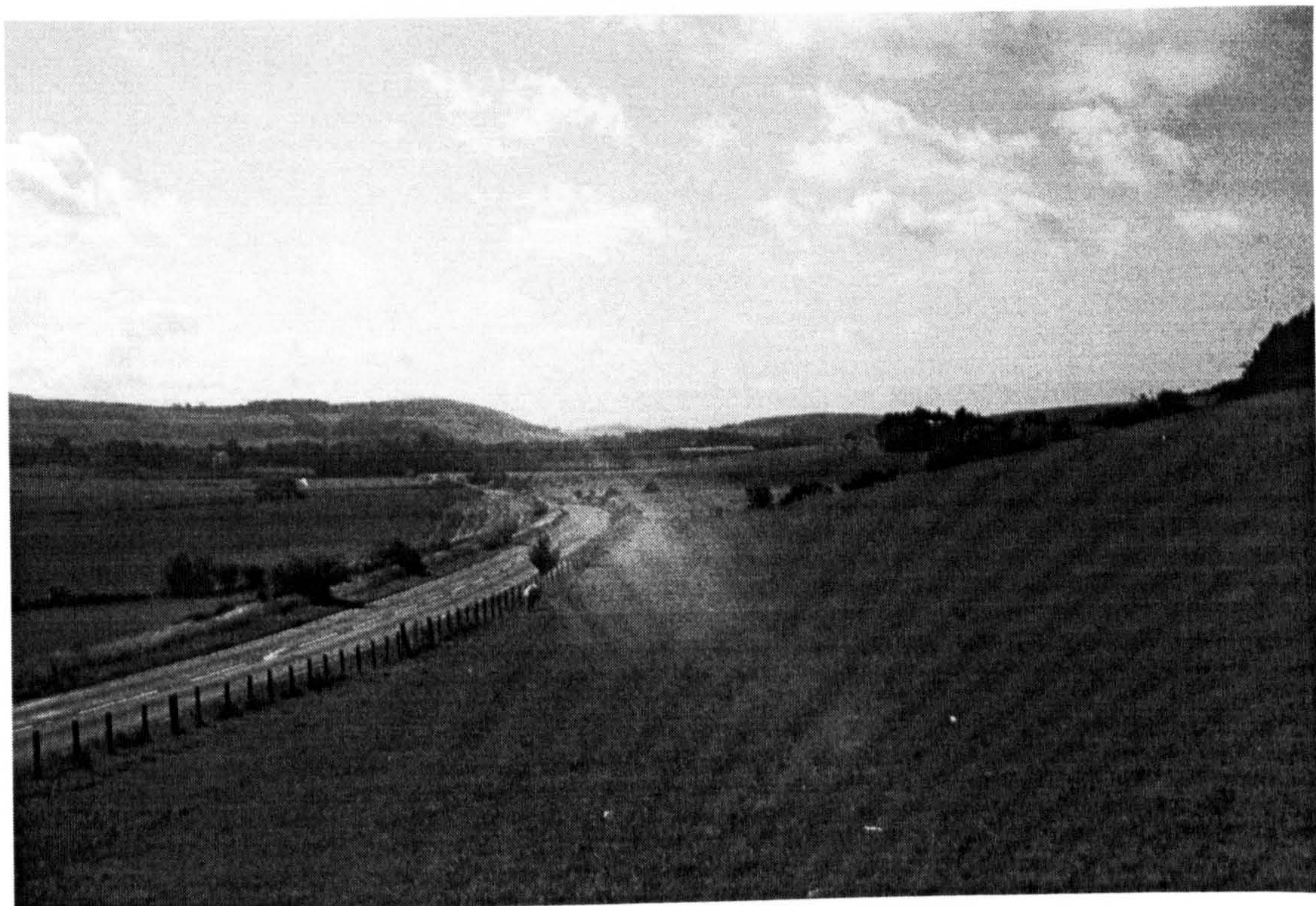




Plate 6.13 The return journey, looking west back along Drylawhill. Notice the land rising uphill to the left and right (south and north). There is a distinct dip half way along the *cursus*.

Plate 6.14 Approaching the point to the west where the *cursus* is no longer visible. It probably continued for some distance beyond where houses now stand. This is very much an experience situated in the modern world.





*Plate 6.15 (top)* Looking west from the western end of Kilmany along the Motray Water valley.

*Plate 6.16 (bottom)* Standing at the western end of Kilmany again, but this time looking east back along the route of the monument. It rises up this steep hill before levelling out for the rest of its length.



### **6.9. Kilmany. October 1996. A walk with a headache.**

This site has an 'unusual' location quite different from most *cursus* monuments as it is on a plateau on an otherwise fairly steep valley side. For most of its length the enclosure runs along the contour and is level but it is still on higher and more undulating ground than most of the other *cursus* sites. It is, however, as with the *cursus* monuments close to water.

A closer look at the site itself, and the landscape in which it lies, reveals much of interest. The western end of the bank barrow appears to kink slightly to the south. This might be because the land on which the western 30m or so of the site drops away dramatically, leaving neither end of the site visible from the other. Walking westwards along where the site was situated I was on level ground until crossing a barbed wire fence to reach the last section of the site which runs steeply downhill. Straight ahead all the time on this short walk was a narrow pass between a pair of low hills on the near horizon (North Hill and Darklaw Hill) (see plates 6.15 and 6.16).

The location of Kilmany offers outstanding views to the west upstream along the valley and may align on the hills. The view downstream - eastwards - is completely obscured from the western end of the site and only becomes partially clearer as you move towards the east. The Motray Water is visible from anywhere on this 'bank barrow' location.

### **6.10 Old Montrose. November 1997. Fieldwalking.**

As part of the Lithic Scatters Project sponsored by Historic Scotland, Eland Stuart and I decided to undertake a programme of fieldwalking around the cropmark complex at Old Montrose and the edge of the Montrose Basin. The full results of the fieldwalking and subsequent geophysical survey and test-pitting will be produced in the future (Barrowman and Stuart forthcoming) but it is worth making a few observations about the chance to spend some time around this interesting area.



The location of the *cursus* itself has been discussed already. It is situated on a low plateau defined by the 15m contour in the centre of the valley of the River North Esk and overlooking the tidal Montrose Basin. The cropmarks here represent millennia of human activity (fig. 6.3) and lithic scatters previously found stretch this back to the Mesolithic. The attraction of this area is obvious when you visit there. The plateau (upon which the modern village of Barnhead sits) has good views up the valley and out to the North Sea. More significantly it sits above the flood plain.

Speaking to local farmers was very informative. They spoke of the problems of keeping the lower fields (some of them only a few hundred metres from the *cursus*) from flooding and aerial photographs record extensive field drainage systems. Even then the fields flood occasionally. The feeling that the cropmarks sit on a kind of island is always present, and trudging back and forth across unproductive fields was a good way of appreciating the muddier soils as one approached the valley floor. This feeling is accentuated by the 'bridge' of land that runs from the north side of the valley towards Barnhead carrying a modern road.

The lithic scatters found in this northern half of the valley tended to be located on the valley side overlooking the drop to the valley floor before the 'island'. Few flints or pieces of chert were found lower than the 15m contour (and these could be explained by ploughing). Virtually none were found on the 'island' itself aside from a few worked pieces of chocolate brown flint. The time spent here mostly in the rain emphasised the wet nature of this place - the river, the puddles in fields, the sea and the Montrose Basin. The *cursus* runs parallel to the valley and river, aligns on the sea and Basin, and overlooks the valley floor. It is in a special dry location and this special place was respected and used for many thousands of years.



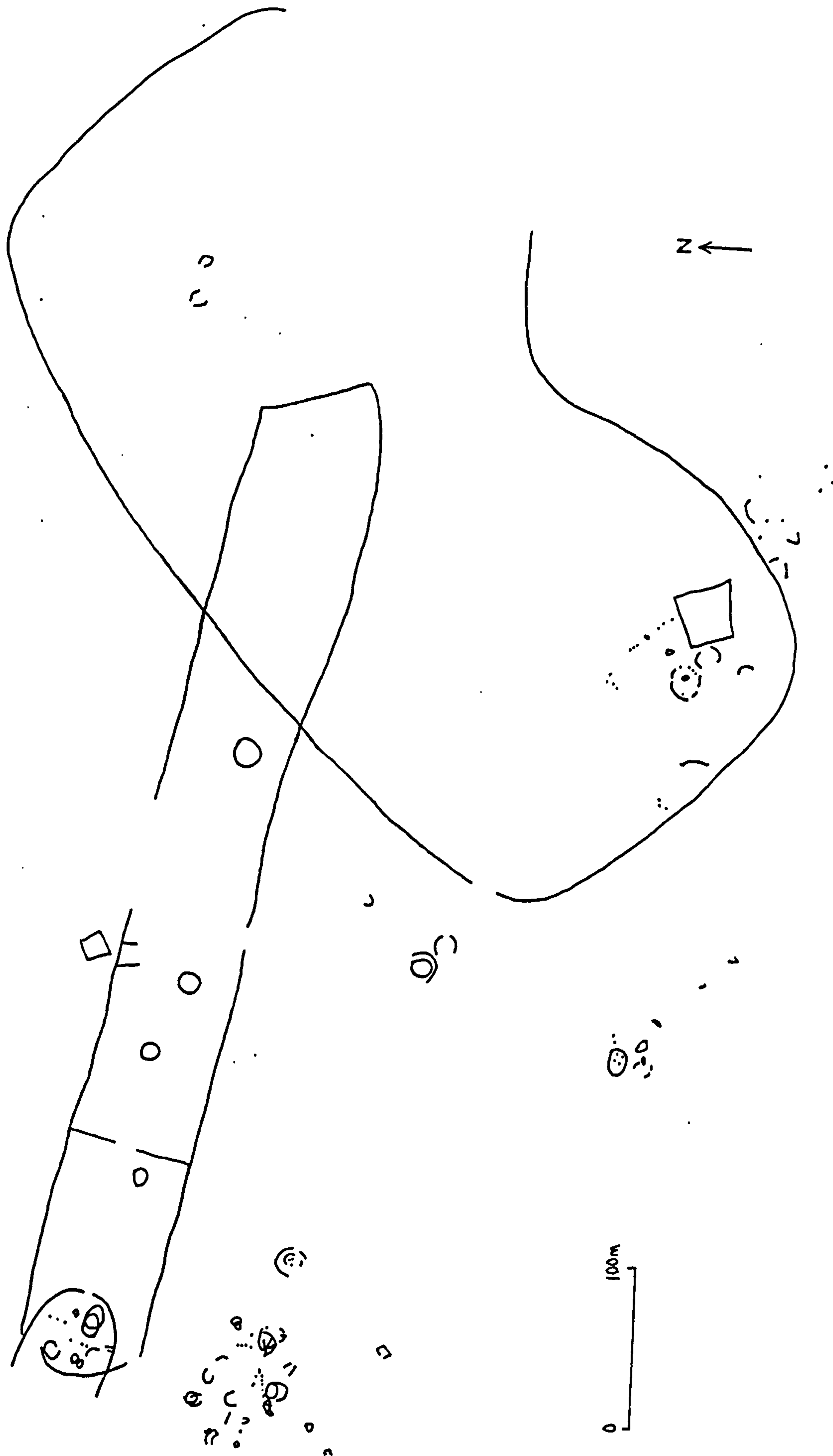


Figure 6.3 Cropmarks at Old Montrose. Based on an RCAHMS transcription at 1:2500 scale.



**6.11. Drybridge. February 1998. With Andrew Baines. A walk.**

Drybridge straddles a pair of fields, full of cows and sheep, and is broken by Dreghorn Road. My only experience of it had been as a cropmark on an aerial photograph. From this I could say little about Drybridge *cursus* other than the information recounted in chapter 3. This is the way which, as archaeologists, we so often see archaeological sites - an abstract series of descriptions, plans and photographs - yet this is to further remove us from those who built and used the *cursus*. To find out more about this site I felt I had to experience it. The site was visited partly from necessity, partly from curiosity. Because of the interesting south-east terminal location I felt that an experience similar to that at Broich was possible. I also wanted to do some fresh fieldwork for a contribution I was soon to make to the *Northern Pasts* conference (Brophy forthcoming b).

It took ten minutes to walk along its known extent, either way, time which included opening various stiff gates and dodging cars. The phenomenological experiences almost began and ended when the farmer told me about the bull in the field.

I started by walking the *cursus* north-west to south-east from 50m beyond the known extent of the 'site'. My view was immediately blocked by a sharp rise in the land which would have obstructed visibility along the *cursus*. I walked up this slope and within thirty seconds, the land levelled out and I could see ahead to the location of the terminal area at a line of trees straight ahead. The walk towards this area was on a slight downslope. As I got closer to it I had to cross hedges and Dreghorn Road. I negotiated a few sheep but still could not see beyond the trees. Finally, I reached the *end* of my walk.

At this point in my notebook I wrote, "stopped abruptly at drop down to the River Irvine. Literally can't see the river until less than 10m from edge". The view immediately ahead was dominated by a small meander in the river, 20m lower than where I stood. Looking to the east I could follow upstream the River



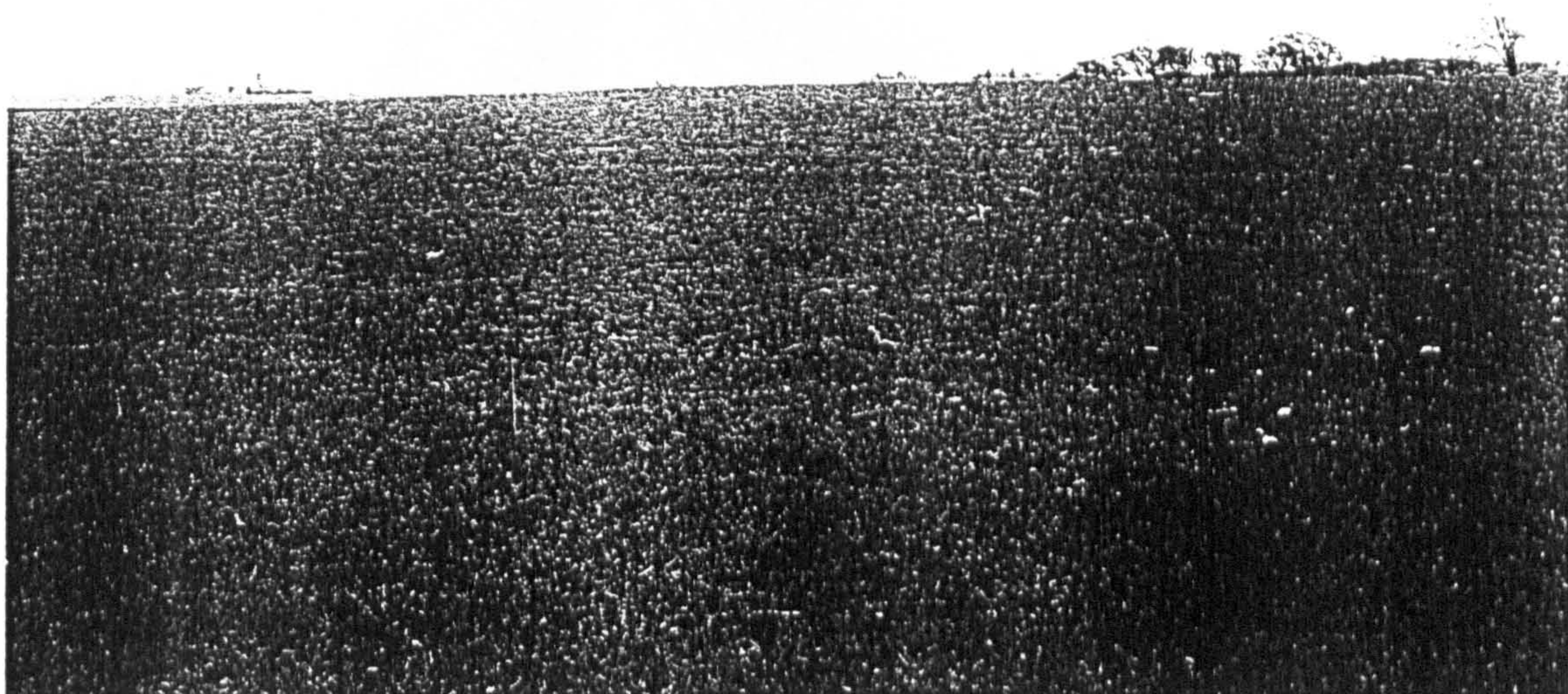


Plate 6.17 Drybridge. Starting the walk, we look straight ahead along where the cursus once lay. The view south along the cursus line is blocked by a natural rise in the topography....

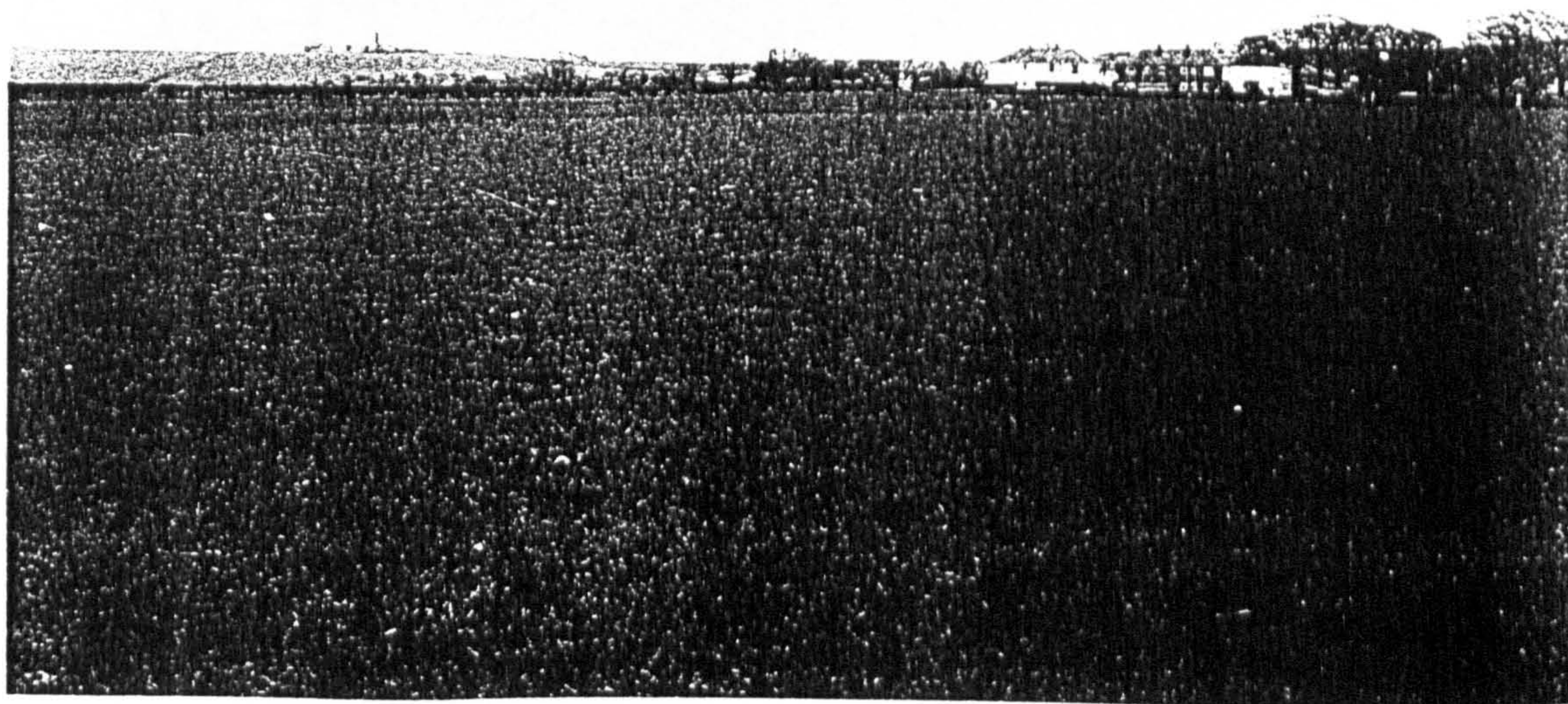


Plate 6.18 ....but a few seconds later, the extent of the landscape where the cursus ran is revealed from the top of the rise....





Plate 6.19 .....and after crossing roads and hedges the tree-lined terminal area of the *cursus* lies ahead....



Plate 6.20 .....until we reached the edge of the terrace and the edge of the *cursus*.



Irvine through a valley. The view west was blocked by a factory. (The walk itself is presented photographically as well (plates 6.17-6.20)).

Walking back towards the north-west along the *cursus* line I headed straight towards the location of a lithic scatter the *cursus* aligns on, marked conveniently by an electricity pylon. From within the enclosure area this area of activity would not have been visible because of the sudden drop in land which was the slope I initially walked up. I reached the top of this slope from the opposite direction and the land drops away beyond to the lithic scatter, the River Irvine (again) a few hundred metres downslope, with Dreghorn and Irvine beyond.

The experiences at Drybridge were more surreal than any other I have had. The seemingly authentic experience of approaching the edge of the *cursus* for the first time was tainted with the juxtaposition of a housing estate just a few hundred yards to my right. On the walk back along the *cursus* I was drawn towards the pylon, protruding from the *cursus* pathway, breaking the horizon like a church spire. It marked a flint scatter, a potentially special place now made metal and dangerous and buzzing.

The landscape disappointed me. I expected sweeping views around the meander to *feel* as if I was surrounded by water (very different to *knowing* I was). The feeling of closeness to water came only in one place, the 'terminal'.

#### **6.12. Eskdalemuir. Lamb Knowe. May 1998. With Andrew Baines. A walk.**

Our second visit to Eskdalemuir was in preparation for a talk to the Prehistoric Society Study Group about *cursus* monuments in Dumfries and Galloway. We concentrated on the Lamb Knowe half of the monument and noticed when we first arrived at the site that the long mound was marked by a band of gorse where the ditches ran (plates 6.21 and 6.22).

We followed the course of the monument from almost the valley floor, walking uphill and southwards towards the terminal. Our starting position was in a steep



field with no visible indication of bank or ditches. The view ahead was almost totally obscured by the grassy slope of the field and it was only after a brisk walk that we reached the end of the field and saw the gorse bounded central mound running ahead of us. The terminal itself was visible on the hillside but was indistinct on a grassy background. As we continued to walk along the site we reached a dip down into a boggy area. From within here the terminal was lost from view but as we climbed back out the terminal appeared straight in from of us breaking the skyline.

Looking back across the valley, the location of the Tom's Knowe terminal would have been discernible if the forestry plantation was not there and the field containing the ploughed out section was clearly visible. On the route back downhill Lamb Knowe was marked again by gorse and scrubby bushes and walking down the view ahead would have been dominated by the river. Whether this monument would ever have actually been walked along (the bank barrow at Crickley Hill seems to have had a paved area alongside it (Darvill 1987)) is unclear. We must also consider that like the Cleaven Dyke it may have been built in segments over time.

### **6.13. Aerial stories. Summer 1998/9. Perthshire and Angus.**

Viewing archaeological sites from the air is a peculiarly modern experience, only possible this century. Although this is a view that would have been impossible for prehistoric people to have of the places they inhabited or the landscape, it is a methodology which gives us a unique way of discovering and recording these places. Aerial archaeology is a practice that is shrouded in objectivity but carries the same preconceptions as excavation or other forms of fieldwork, and the same mixture of subjectivity and interpretation. On this flight the objective was to attempt to find some cropmarks towards the end of an unproductive summer season. The target areas in eastern Perthshire and central Angus are cropmark areas which are usually amongst the most productive for the aerial photographer. It was also a chance for us to fly over some *cursus* monuments.



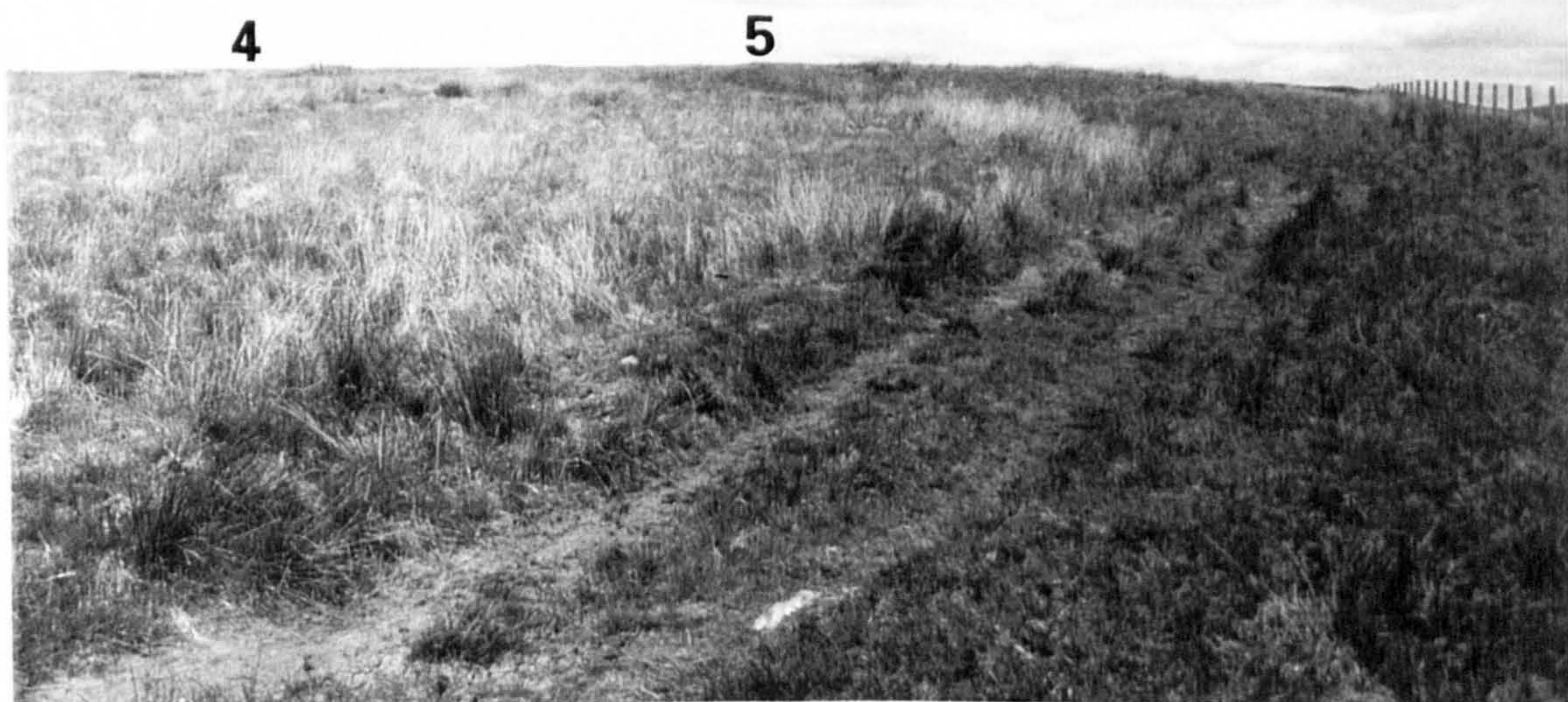
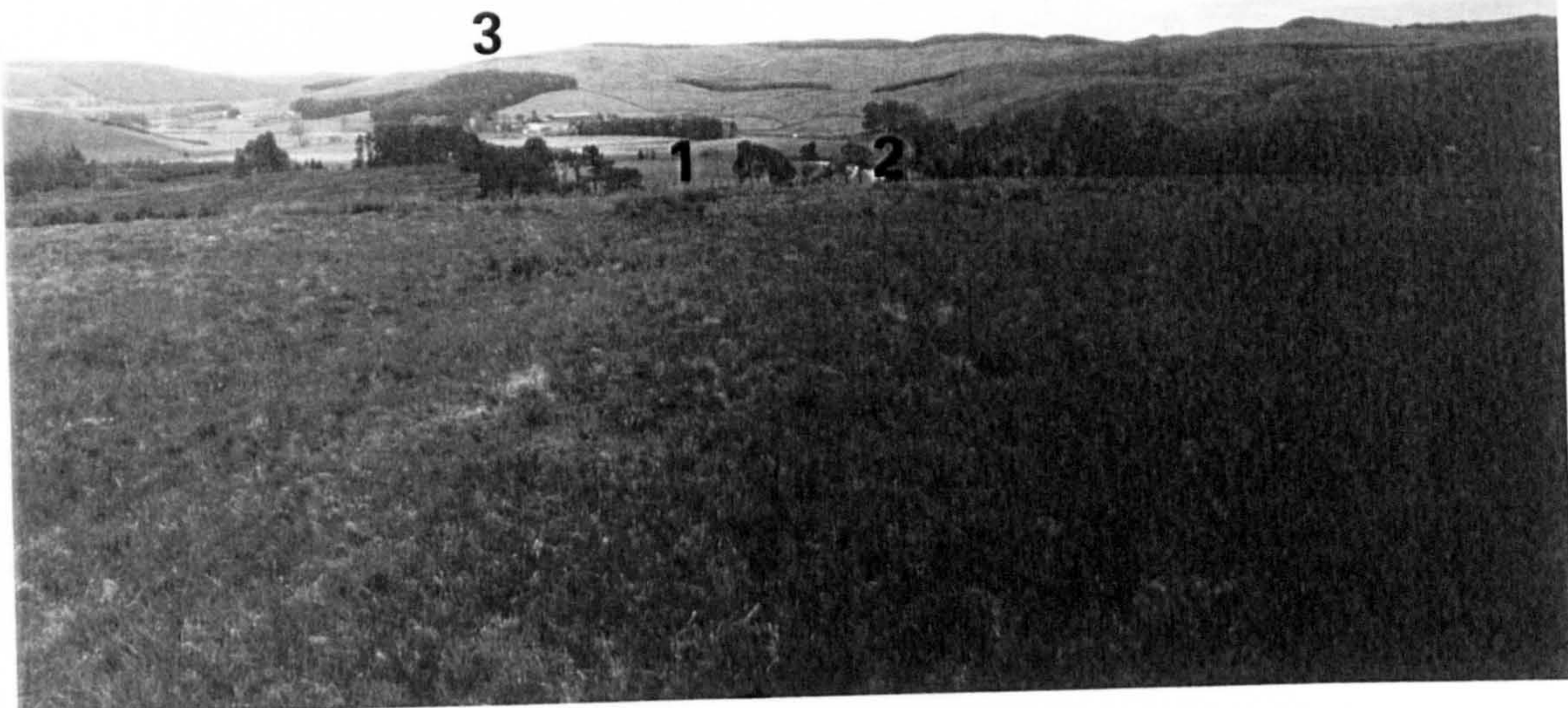


Plate 6.21 (top) Lamb Knowe. Looking south along the flattened remains of the earthwork. 1 and 2 show the gorse-line ditches of the monument and 3 is located directly over the location of Tom's Knowe terminal.

Plate 6.22 (bottom) Lamb Knowe. Looking uphill along the monument from 600m south of the terminal (which is not visible here). 4 and 5 mark the positions of the ditches.



In all, the flight took in the locations of four *cursus* sites with varying degrees of success. Between these places we looked for other cropmarks and photographed football stadiums. Our first stop was the Cleaven Dyke, and the cropmark section was visible as it usually is. We flew around it but did not photograph it as it had been recorded previously that summer. When we flew over Milton of Rattray the farmer was harvesting his crop and the field was half yellow, half brownish yellow, but there was no sign of the site itself. Our flight continued on towards Montrose to look for the cropmarks around Barnhead. Unfortunately once again, there were no signs of Old Montrose *cursus* here.

The only photographed site of the day was Balneaves Cottage. The brownish cropmarks of the pits were visible in the yellow field from over a kilometre away in the half of the site north of the road. This was a different way of experiencing Balneaves Cottage, three years after I had first visited the place. Unlike my phenomenological walks this was not how this site could possibly have been viewed in the Neolithic.

A second flight a year later, in the midst of an equally disappointing summer for cropmark spotting, I wanted to concentrate on the Cleaven Dyke in more detail. Photographs of the site from the air had tended to capture bits of the site, often concentrating on the cropmark section or the cleared stretches in the woodland. I wanted to record the site in its entirety, looking along its length. This is a place that on the ground can only ever be encountered segment by segment, step by step. This bird's eye view takes it all in in seconds. Rather than discount the aerial view as artificial and meaningless, we should feel privileged to see these sites as their builders could only dream of. We can take these aerial perspectives into our walks on the ground and then they become part of the phenomenological description. We should not ignore these aerial views but acknowledge the part that they play in helping to create our interpretations of the past in the present.



#### **6.14. Hooray for Hollywood. Straight lines in a hermeneutic circle.**

My various visits to the Hollywood sites over the past five years span much of the period of my research on *cursus* monuments and represent the development of a more self-critical stance as opposed to my initial idealism. Only after a re-evaluation of my earlier fieldwork as an undergraduate did I conclude that I was always already part of a hermeneutic circle which I had not even realised I had entered.

I drove down to Hollywood for a weekend of visiting sites for my undergraduate dissertation in November 1995, and Hollywood 1 was the first *cursus* I walked along. I had already observed from aerial photos and the RCAHMS transcription that Hollywood 2 aligns on the 12 Apostles stone circle, an observation made elsewhere - "it would, if extended, run directly towards the twelve apostles" (Burl 1995, 124). However, I wanted to experience the sites and how they related to one another on the ground and emulate Tilley (1994) although these were clearly not on the scale of the Dorset *cursus*. I suppose that it was an attempt to put myself in the mind of a Neolithic person and to see from their eyes some of the same things they saw.

We arrived in a field on a rather overcast day, unsure of how to begin. The location of the *cursus* was estimated from the transcriptions, some alignments with the corners of houses, and a series of 30m tapes, and soon a red and white ranging pole stood erect at each corner of the *cursus*. We also marked the eastern causeway in the north half. It was already late afternoon, and the sun cast long shadows from the poles and from us. I took notes and photographs, from which I reconstructed the short journey. Annotated overlays were placed across colour photographs (plate 6.23).

"I walked along Hollywood 1 firstly, starting in the north. The land sloped gently into a hollow which runs across most of the width of the *cursus*. The road and hedges crossing the *cursus* made it impossible to see the other terminal, but the terminals would have been intervisible. Beyond the road, the interior of the



cursus was up to a metre higher, which may be an indication of an upward slope...From the road, southwards, the cursus runs up a slight slope towards a ridge, beyond which nothing could be seen other than the [far] horizon. The hill of Criffel can be seen just to the right of the cursus line....If there had been a terminal bank of any height, what was beyond the edge of the promontory would have been out of sight until the last few metres of the cursus was reached" (Brophy 1995, 102; and see fig. 6.4).

I visited Holywood 2 briefly the next day (plate 6.24) and noted that it also had one terminal on a natural promontory, and suggested that the 'correct' direction of movement within the cursus was focused towards these 'dominant' terminals. These terminal areas, to the north end of Holywood 2 and the south end of Holywood 1, were, for me, the focus of activity and movement within the cursus sites. The relationship between the cursus and the twelve apostles (and even a possible henge which the southern cursus may align towards on the other side of the Cluden Water) was largely ignored in these early walks. Little thought was given to the relative chronology of these sites and particularly where the stone circle fitted in.

I visited the sites once again in 1996, over two days, to undertake some fieldwalking across the southern half of Holywood 2 in a shroud of fog (plate 1.2). The exercise was largely unsuccessful, with mostly burnt plastic to show for our efforts. Our efforts were concentrated on a field containing the cursus when perhaps we should have widened our horizons and looked for possible lithic scatters across the wider area. (Previously only stray flints had been found around Holywood (Miller 1994)).

As I reconsidered the sites for a paper delivered at the *Theoretical Archaeology Group* Conference in 1996, I realised that all of these experiences had been trapped by the unseen monument boundaries. (Like Tilley, I had walked along a cursus projecting outwards to the wider landscape, yet never venturing beyond the monument boundaries). The only relationship I had suggested for the cursus



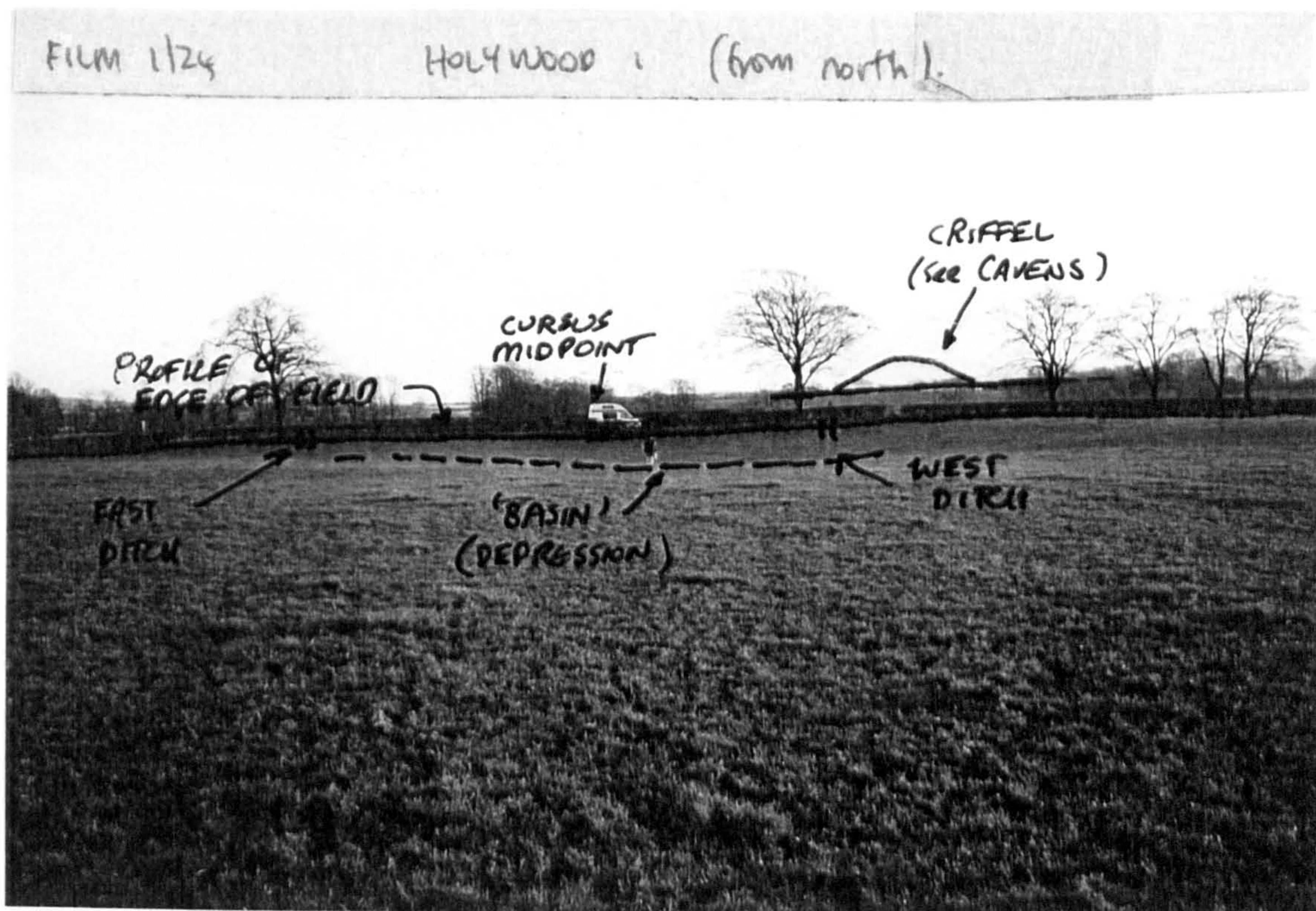


Plate 6.23 (top) My first visit to Hollywood 1. This is an early attempt to illustrate the observations of a cursus walk in the form of an acetate overlay.

Plate 6.24 (bottom) Walking south along Hollywood 2 in the fog. The slight depression marked by 6 probably marks the western ditch of the *cursus*.



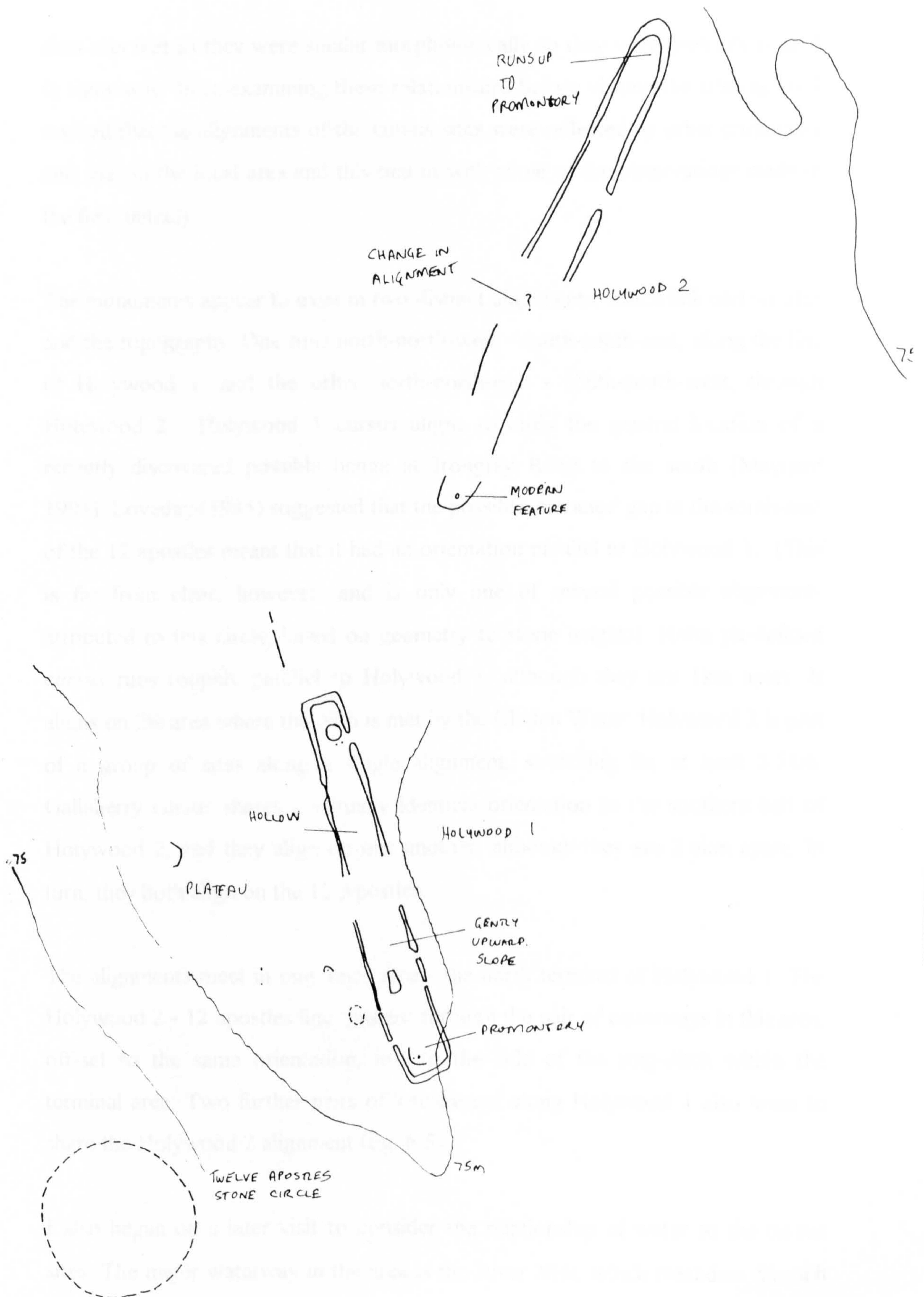


Figure 6.4 Walking along Hollywood 1 and Hollywood 2. Observations from my first visits to these sites (from Brophy 1995, fig.31).



sites was that as they were similar morphologically so they were probably related in some way. In re-examining these relationships before visiting the sites again, I noticed that the alignments of the cursus sites were reflected by other cropmarks and sites in the local area and this tied in with some of the observations made in the field initially.

The monuments appear to exist in two distinct alignments, which link certain sites and the topography. One runs north-north-west - south-south-east, along the line of Hollywood 1, and the other north-north-east - south-south-west, through Hollywood 2. Hollywood 1 cursus aligns towards the general location of a recently discovered possible henge at Irongray Road to the south (Maynard 1993). Loveday (1985) suggested that the possible 'entrance' gap in the south-east of the 12 apostles meant that it had an orientation parallel to Hollywood 1. (This is far from clear, however, and is only one of several possible alignments attributed to this circle, based on geometry to stone heights). Holm pit-defined *cursus* runs roughly parallel to Hollywood 1, although they are 1km apart. It aligns on the area where the Nith is met by the Cluden Water. Hollywood 2 is part of a group of sites along a single alignment, stretching for at least 3.5km. Gallaberry cursus shares a virtually identical orientation to the southern half of Hollywood 2, and they align on one another, although they are 2.6km apart. In turn, they both align on the 12 Apostles.

The alignments meet in only one place - the north terminal of Hollywood 1. The Hollywood 2 - 12 apostles line 'passes' through the pair of causeways in this area, off-set to the same orientation, just to the side of the ring-ditch within the terminal area. Two further pairs of 'causeways' along Hollywood 1 also seem to share the Hollywood 2 alignment (fig. 6.5).

I also began on a later visit to consider the relationship of water to the cursus sites. The major waterway in the area is the River Nith, which meanders through its wide flood plain towards the estuary where it will meet the Solway Firth to the south. The Cluden Water flows roughly west to east, and is a



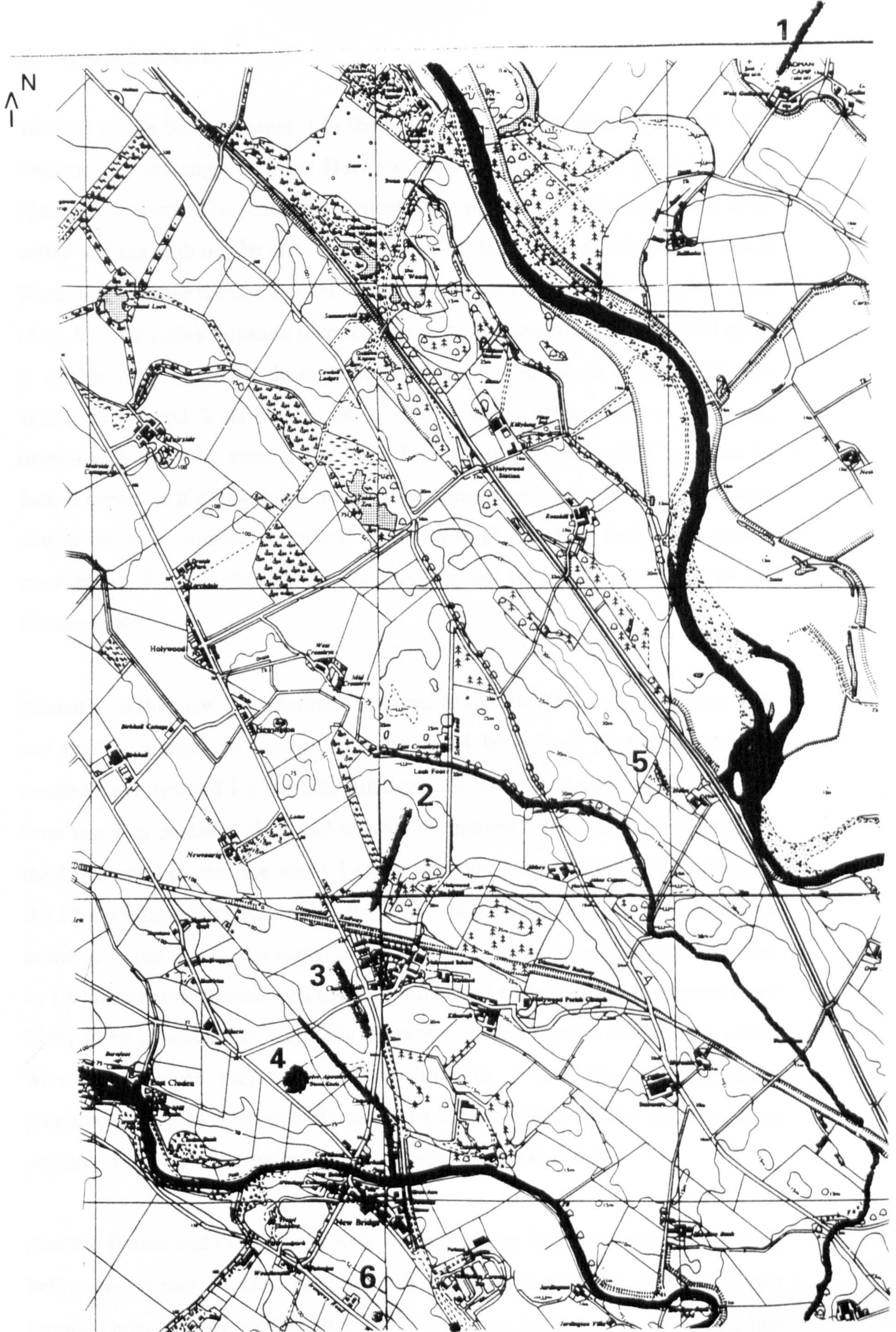


Figure 6.5 Alignments in the Hollywood landscape. The background map grid is in square kilometres. Numbering: 1. Gallaberry; 2. Hollywood 2; 3. Hollywood 1; 4. 12 Apotles; 5. Holm; 6. Irongray Road 'henge'.



tributary of the Nith, meeting it to the south-east of Holywood. My initial field observations had suggested that Holywood 1 points towards the Cluden Water, 450m to the south. The southern terminal (on a promontory) overlooks this river valley and the Nith can be seen beyond. The 12 Apostles is closer to the Cluden Water but, because the circle is set back from the plateau edge, is not within sight of it. A small valley between them carries a stream according the 1:10000 map. A stream usually passes through this valley, running south into the Cluden Water. Holywood 2 terminates on a subtle natural promontory to the north overlooking a nearby stream, the Loch Foot Burn, now concealed by trees. In fact, it seems as if all the large monumental components of this complex have a stream or river running between them - except the two Holywood cursus monuments. The possible henge, for instance, lay on the southern side of the Cluden Water.

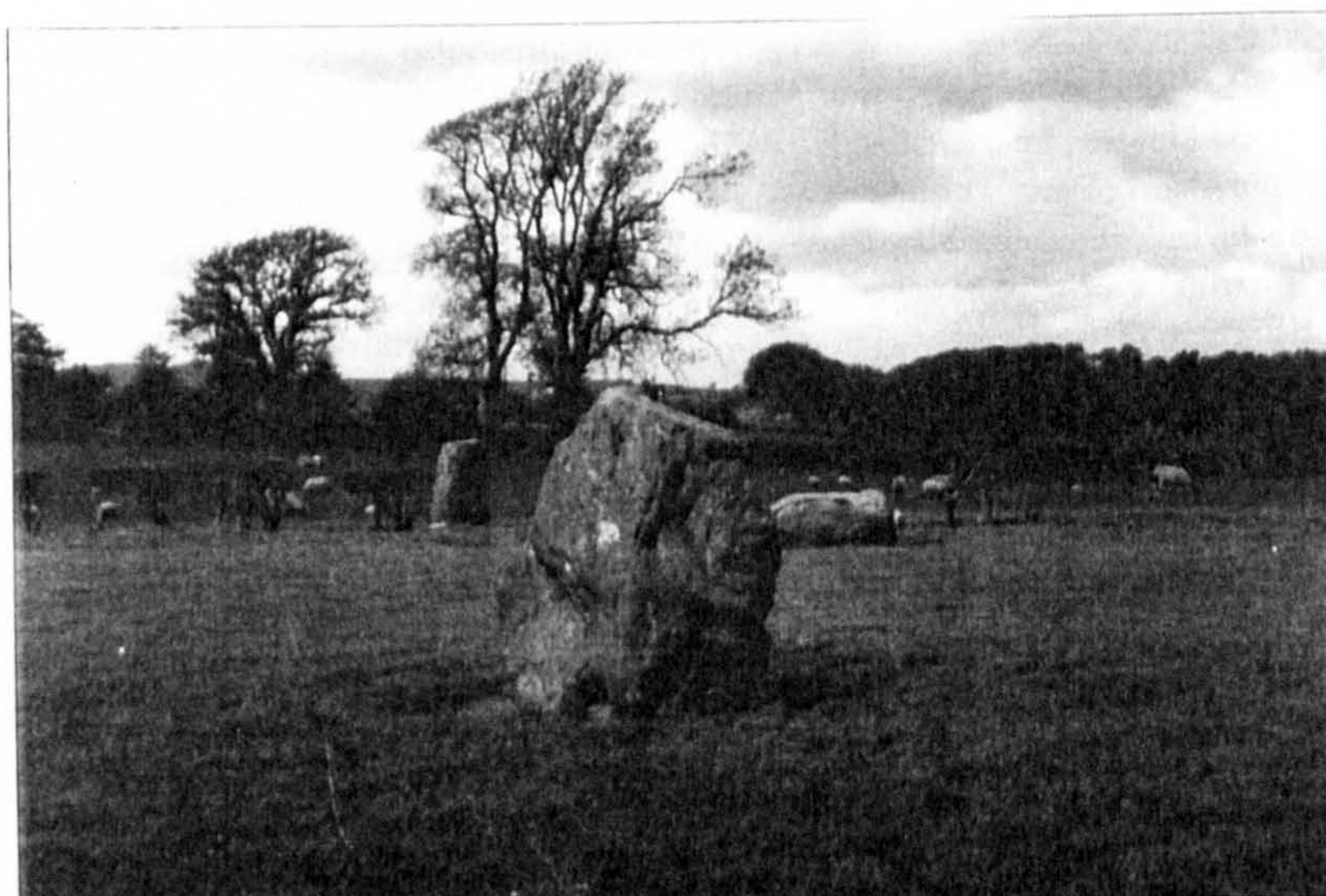
Armed with this new information, I returned to the sites just over two years after my first visit eager to explore in more detail both these parallel alignments centred on Holywood 1's north terminal and the water relationship. My walk this time was less enclosed (I moved outwith monument boundaries and considered the landscape between the sites). I chose the route along Holywood 2 cursus to the 12 Apostles (plates 6.25 and 6.26). This was the chosen direction as it seemed to me to be the way it was meant to be walked (clear echoes of Tilley). A cursus, by its linear nature, directs you towards something whereas a circle appears more likely to be a destination. Certainly, there were a few aspects of my walk which were effective (to me) only in that direction. I was also thinking about monuments as places, special places, perhaps formalising ancient locations long revered or known about before the monument was constructed.

Andrew Baines and I started our walk late on a sunny December morning, a week before the winter solstice. Standing where we estimated the north-north-east terminal area of Holywood 2 cursus once stood, we looked along the cursus line with our view obscured by a modern plantation. Behind us, the land dropped away towards Loch Foot Burn and, to the north the cursus ignores the





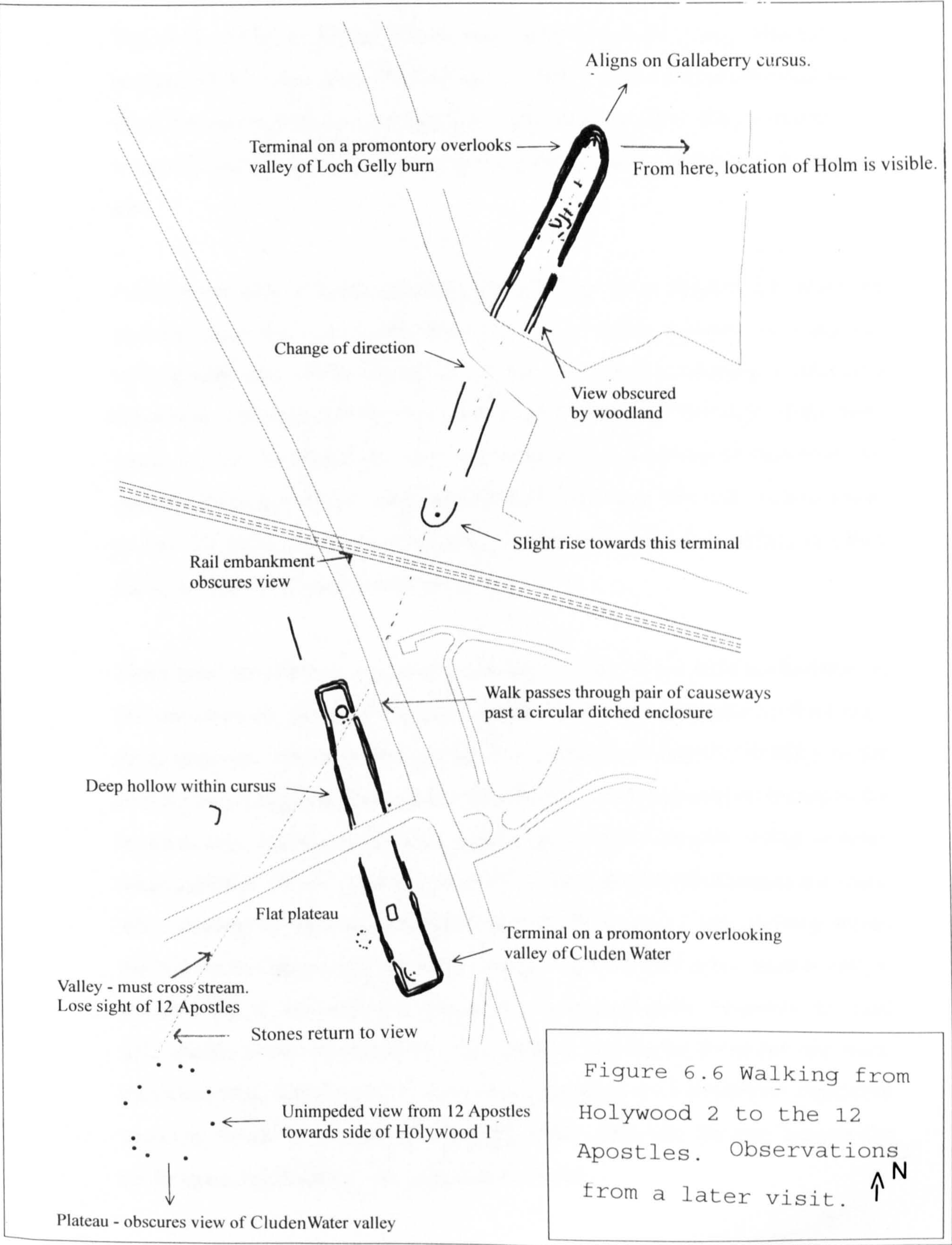
*I walked along Holywood 2 cursus, passed through Holywood 1 cursus, but then had to balance on top of an old gate to cross the stream and reach the 12 Apostles.*



*The self-imposed end of my experience at Holywood comes as I emerge from the stream valley to encounter the 12 Apostles.*

Plates 6.25 and 6.26 Two significant points on the walk from Holywood 2 to the 12 Apostles.







opportunity to align on any of the distinct hilltops on the horizon. The walk along the cursus to the trees took minutes across a level field, amidst grazing sheep. The stone circle would have been impossible to see from here, blocked by a terminal bank of any size. The faint indentations of the wide ditches flanked us. Then through the trees, scrambling across roots and burrows. We clambered over a barbed wire fence, looking along the cursus line again, dazzled by the midday sun.

A slight rise took us to the end of Holywood 2 but we continued on towards our eventual goal, the stone circle that the cursus points towards. A rising rail embankment that was no longer in use ahead obscured everything. I snapped a fence wire, and scratched my face on bramble bushes. Our first sight of the stone circle is not a 'Neolithic' one as it was from the top of the rail embankment. We squinted to see the stones, small and squat and indistinct. We had to know where to look for them. Down the other side, passing by somebody's garden, and then the green cross code and across the A76.

From here, we climbed a gate and entered the area of the northern terminal of Holywood south, passing through the offset pair of terminals and close by a ring-ditch structure. The gaps through the cursus may have allowed visibility to the area beyond and given access to the circular enclosure or mound contained in the terminal area. Perhaps at this point movement stopped for story telling or some other activities. The 12 Apostles were still visible ahead behind hedges and trees. We continued to move towards them, leaving Holywood 1 and, walking across the flat terrace the cursus straddles. Another gate, another road, another hedge, and then the 12 Apostles was clear and close in front of us. Suddenly, the land falls sharply down into a stream valley, and as we crossed down into the water the stones were lost from view. A wooden gate spans the burn and we clambered across it. When we re-emerged from the valley, back into the sun, we saw the circle again, approaching one of the tallest stones.



Moving along this pathway, we experienced the role water and topography played in controlling visibility and freedom of movement between sites (themes I will develop in more detail in later chapters). If Hollywood 1 cursus had still been visible I would have passed through it on my way to the 12 Apostles, involving both cursus sites in the journey. The role of the ring ditch, also on this alignment, is unclear - how did it relate chronologically to the cursus it lies within? The overall chronology of the complex is a problem, of course. Internal cursus features - the ring ditch, the internal pit lines - are of unclear relationship to the cursus monuments and it has to be suspected the 12 Apostles is later than the cursus sites. It may well be, however, that the stone circle merely defines a *locale* in the landscape which was always already important and marked in more temporary ways. (This could be suggested for other sites in the complex as well).

What conclusions did I reach at this stage? I felt that the complex represented a change in ritual focus at some point in time, moving from the alignment of Hollywood 1 to the more embellished and monumental Gallaberry - Hollywood 2 - Hollywood 1 north terminal - 12 Apostles line. (Such changes in focus have been studied in the excavated Dorchester-on-Thames cursus complex and on Cranborne Chase). The new order recalled the old by passing along entrances on the cursus and perhaps this was embellished with a burial mound or circular enclosure. The earlier alignment concentrated on a series of parallel features, the later in one single line. I associated such groups of sites with earlier activity, formalised by monumental pathways, creating areas of liminality (crossing cursus ditches and banks, passing down and through valleys, and crossing water). The change in alignment could be associated with a new ritual order or cosmology. This retained obvious echoes with the older pathway with the similar juxtaposition of linear and circular enclosures. The latter both incorporated and alluded to the earlier monuments at one location, the northern terminal of Hollywood 1.

This substantially changed my initial interpretations of the sites from my first limited walks. Now the focus of activity in Hollywood 1 moved from the southern



to the northern terminal. At Holywood 2 there was no clear focus other than outwards towards another cursus to the north and a stone circle / special place to the south. The cursus monuments could now be viewed not merely as places in themselves, but also transitory places, perhaps stopping points along longer paths through the landscape. The relationship with water changed from merely dominant locations overlooking it to being components of the same ritualised experience. Both cursus and river may have been liminal places.

My next visits to Holywood were related to Julian Thomas' excavations there in the summer of 1997. A few months previously, several of us visited the sites to discuss the location of the trenches and the scope of the excavation. I suggested that trenches were opened up in places with no cropmarks but still on the routes of the two focal points I had been thinking about. The small stream valley between Holywood 1 and the 12 Apostles for instance or between the two cursus sites. These suggestions were not taken up.

The excavations themselves were a more intimate experience, visiting the site daily for four weeks and spending most of the day there. This was more than walking along an invisible enclosure which is an abstract and difficult process. This was actually re-digging the ditches and pit features of the sites. Most of my time was spent in the northern terminal of Holywood 1, which I regarded as the focal point of the whole complex. The excavations, already discussed in some detail in chapter 3, suggested that there was a long sequence of activity here from the pits and post-holes to the large cursus ditch and the ring-ditch. The latter was not contemporary with the cursus and probably a later addition.

The excavations were a chance to once again re-evaluate my interpretations and think about my experiences. My ideas of the special nature of the 12 Apostles for instance were based on this as a special place and I hoped, I suppose, that the dig would reveal evidence of earlier activity here, perhaps in the form of an earlier timber circle. Nevertheless, the opportunities to spend so much time in a prehistoric landscape like this are few and far between and they allow one to get



involved in both the underground features and the local topography in a way that is necessary in archaeology.

Doubts about my methodology and interpretations remained in my mind. These led to a paper for the 1997 *Theoretical Archaeology Group* meeting (see Brophy 1998b). I had worked on gaining a better understanding of phenomenology and for the first time formulated of a critique of Tilley's experiencing phenomenology (much of which is discussed in chapter 5). I began to realise that past experiences at Holywood were parts of a hermeneutic. My initial naive fieldwork, with little or no understanding of phenomenology, was now looked on, not with regrets or disappointment but as a necessary stage in my interaction with the archaeological traces at Holywood.

My first re-interpretation emerged from changing the scope of my experiences - walking between monuments not just within for instance - and came up with not only a different interpretation of both the directions of movement, suggested by my earlier walks, but also a fuller consideration of the chronology and focus of the complex. Yet there had been no reflection on what I would now term the pre-phenomenology and so these experiences were de-contextualised. I also missed an interesting opportunity - I walked through the complex with a friend (also an archaeologist) yet didn't ask him to give a full account of his experiences. I could have had two different readings of the monumental parts of this landscape. What did he read and think? We discussed the experience as we went along, so is the experience actually ours? There was no idea of any dialogue (however, see Bender (1998) for a dialogue within a cursus landscape).

Reflection on the fieldwork soon revealed a whole set of preconceptions, labels and expectations which I uncritically had applied to all or some of my walks at Holywood.

I assumed that each site was a cursus, for what that term is worth. Each site, visible only from the air as cropmarks, fulfilled certain morphological criteria.



## Theory and fieldwork

(Excavation has shown that these are Neolithic and are what would traditionally be regarded as cursus monuments if discovered in England).

The visible extent of the site was thought to be one unitary construction.

The function of the enclosures was also to an extent partially decided - they defined linear movement, so I walked along them.

The ditches and banks contained the experience, so I stuck within the cursus boundaries. Tilley (1994) saw the cursus experience as being a distinct ritual activity - entering and leaving the cursus saw a return to the mundane world.

The linearity of the cursus sites controlled me, so that even when I moved outwith the cursus sites, I maintained their linearity. This would pre-determine how I approached the monuments.

This contained activity was ritual in nature. (The implication of this is that there were other places in the surrounding area which were not ritual, but domestic, agricultural or funerary).

I assumed that from these monuments I could extrapolate out my experience to discussing more general themes of society and the people who built and used the cursus.

I was expecting to see things rather as Tilley found them, just as Tilley may have after his initial foray into this type of archaeology.

My interpretations of such experiences were based on many of the ideas introduced by Tilley - concepts of space and place, anthropological accounts of natural features being drawn into societies' architecture, biographies and identity. In reflection, my interpretations were bound to look a bit like his.



I have already discussed the paradoxical relationship archaeologists share with sites and landscape - we know too much, but also too little. At Holywood I encountered hedges, fields, a rail embankment, two busy roads, gates and experienced someone's garden. From a distance, I mistook sheep for standing stones. I had to go into fields with cows. I asked the farmers permission to walk on their land. I failed to see the cursus sites long since ploughed away. It is the landscape of the present, yet I had to imagine myself in a different landscape. This isn't merely a physical challenge but a cognitive one. How can I hope to see important aspects of past landscapes, temporal markers that don't survive, or things insignificant to me? The vegetation cover at the time may have blocked inter-visibilitys I notice today. It may have blocked or shaped movement. Trees could have placed monuments in secluded secret places. It is a text where some words are missing and we make up a few ones of our own.

This self-critique is not the closing of the hermeneutic circle, just another part of the dialogue I am playing out with these sites. Two further visits since have added to my experiences here. In 1998 I spent another four weeks here excavating at Holm. Again here there is a change of alignment or focus through time on a rather smaller scale. The triple post-alignment regarded as the cursiform element of the complex (which runs parallel to Holywood 1) was later replaced by an avenue running across it in a different alignment (not the same as Holywood 2 however). The situation in the landscape overlooking the Nith was special and no more so when the Nith flooded and burst its banks. Cursus and river ran parallel both widening out across their local environment (cursus with a triple alignment, river flooding).

In June this year we flew near Holywood but no cropmarks were visible. In a sense we had come full circle from my initial visit with no idea of where the cropmarks were. My interpretations of these sites had changed and no doubt will change again after a fuller assessment of the excavation results (see chapters 7-9 for further ideas about these sites). Ideas about the methodology of my fieldwork have also developed over the last five years and Holywood has been a microcosm



of this process. Where the hermeneutic circle started is unclear and it is certainly not yet closed.

### **6.16. Excavations at Milton of Rattray**

The participants in the excavation are noted in the report by their initials. Unless stated otherwise, the author is myself. Others contributors to this part of this report are AB (Andrew Baines), SMc (Sam McKeand) and GSM (Gordon Maxwell). The other excavators were RL (Robert Lennox) and GJB (Gordon Barclay). Context numbers are given in brackets (004) and feature numbers have an F prefix. A full context list and descriptions is given in Appendix II.

#### *First season (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> September 1997). Pre-excavation.*

The excavation of a possible pit-defined cursus was undertaken over two seasons in September 1997 and February 1998. Various preconceptions were taken into the excavation, mostly based around the term 'cursus', presupposing that the monument is Neolithic, and some kind of ritual enclosure. The pits were also suspected of having once held posts, as were found at the excavations of other pit-defined rectilinear sites - Douglasmuir (Kendrick 1995), Bannockburn 2 (Rideout 1997) and Littleour (Barclay & Maxwell 1998). I excavated at Littleour, and dug several post-holes, which along with excavations at Holywood just before the first season, gave me a better idea of what to expect from cropmark sites in river gravel subsoils. The contents of the pits at these Neolithic rectilinear enclosures gave me a high expectation of finding the same kind of thing at Milton of Rattray. I also hoped that there would be evidence for features between these relatively widely spaced pits, perhaps stake-holes or smaller post-holes, not evident on the aerial photographs. It is illustrated with sketches from our notebooks, and our on-site recording. For excavation drawings, see chapter 6.



*We will be staying in the relative luxury of a caravan near Dunkeld. Facilities include sit down shower, bed clothes, cooking facilities etc. We will also have free access to an indoor heated swimming pool and sauna, so bring your trunks. There is also a lounge bar with 'family entertainment' i.e. the Krankies or the Grumbleweeds. Unfortunately, I regret to announce that we are too old for the Busy Bee club (extract from notes for the excavators prepared by KB).*

*Day 1. Showers.*

Digging commenced in the afternoon, with an initial trial pit establishing the topsoil depth of little more than 25cm, and also giving us a feel for the natural. We then used the transcription to set about opening an initial trench (trench 1) along the northern pit-alignment before reinforcements would arrive the following day.

*Sam [SMc] and Andrew [AB], using tapes, telegraph poles, and apparently guesswork located what they suspected was where a pit line would be. We 'de-turfed' a 5 x 5m trench, although I am unsure about this trench's accuracy. KB, daybook.*

We retreated to our caravan doubting whether our hard work had been worth it, and whether we really had put the trench in the correct location. I was worried.

*Day 2. Showers, cold.*

Trench 1 was dug down to the natural, and cleaned. Our recalculations showed it was almost certainly in the centre of the site, half way between the pit-alignments. We set up the site grid, and with the arrival of more help, we calculated more accurately where the trench should be. After some frantic digging, we came down directly on top of one of the pits. Amidst the gravel subsoil, an oval feature, measuring about 2m by 1m, was identified. The aerial photos were re-consulted, and the cropmark pits do seem to share this elongate shape. The size and nature of this feature was unknown, but interpretations (or



perhaps just a 'wish list' of what we want them to be) included a ramped post-hole, or a double pit. It was also noted that the pit was 'grave-shaped', and some large stones around the edge were tenuously postulated as being the remains of a small cairn. At this stage, we were open to any interpretations.

*The team members relaxed in the evening, with three staying at the Caravan Park in Dunkeld (AB, KB and SMc). The site was discussed over a vegetable chilli, and then they went to the entertainments centre of the site to witness the cabaret act for the evening, an all-round singer and entertainer called Wee Wardie.*

*Day 3. No weather recorded.*

Two main foci of the work today - the cleaning, recording and excavation of the pit in trench 2 by GSM (called at this point F003 for rather confusing reasons), and the opening of a second trench by hand over the suspected location of the adjacent pit to the W.

**GSM** - "At first the feature (cut 005) looked promising, its outline appearing quite distinctly out of the natural subsoil as a result of the difference between the uniform fine-grained 'clayey' fill (004) and the parent material of the site - silty gravel (of fluvioglacial origin?). The presence of 'anomalous' rounded cobbles projecting from the surface of the re-fill further removed the appearance from a natural or gradual infill process. The absence of burned / carbonised debris should have given pause for thought, however, but the rapid discovery of the feature's shallowness was discouraging. Considering the closeness of the feature to the present surface and the likely recent agricultural history of the site, what we saw was very likely to have approximated closely to what was there originally. Therefore the only clues to aid interpretation are (a) the nature of the infill; (b) and the physical shape of the feature".



*GSM half-sectioned the (005) in the afternoon to reveal it appears to be a shallow linear 'pit' with one fill, a clay-type yellow, smooth, clean deposit, with fairly large rounded pebble inclusions. At its deepest it is no more than 25cm deep, and about 2.54m long - KB, daybook.*

Interpretations of this half-excavated feature were of a pit with one act of deliberate back-filling. The material seemed completely different from the surrounding natural gravel, and the large stones in the centre seem to be part of a unitary deposit.

*It is disappointing in a way that the pit isn't a dramatic deep post-hole. KB Daybook.*

AB and myself started to look for a second pit, opening and extending a new trench, working hard and using our experience of the previous day's discovery to look for something similar. The trench was positioned through looking at the transcription, the aerial photograph, and some probing work undertaken by GSM, potentially located the linear cropmark which runs north-south across the pit-alignments.

**GSM** - "Not an exact science, but a skill that all field archaeologists should at least experience, at best seek to acquire as it teaches one to observe and 'listen' to sub-surface traces more sympathetically. Not that it is to be resorted to without first considering the possible downside - false information, damage to associated artefacts etc....In the event, while moderate success was achieved in identifying sub-surface anomalies, the determination of which of these was archaeological in origin (and so 'joining up the dots' proved less convincing than even average geophysical remote sensing operation! The probe used was the 87cm long, solid steel number (2cm diameter)....This massive piece of hardware can, given the right conditions, be astonishingly sensitive, but its ruinous on the wrists and should only be handled by a heavily gloved operator".



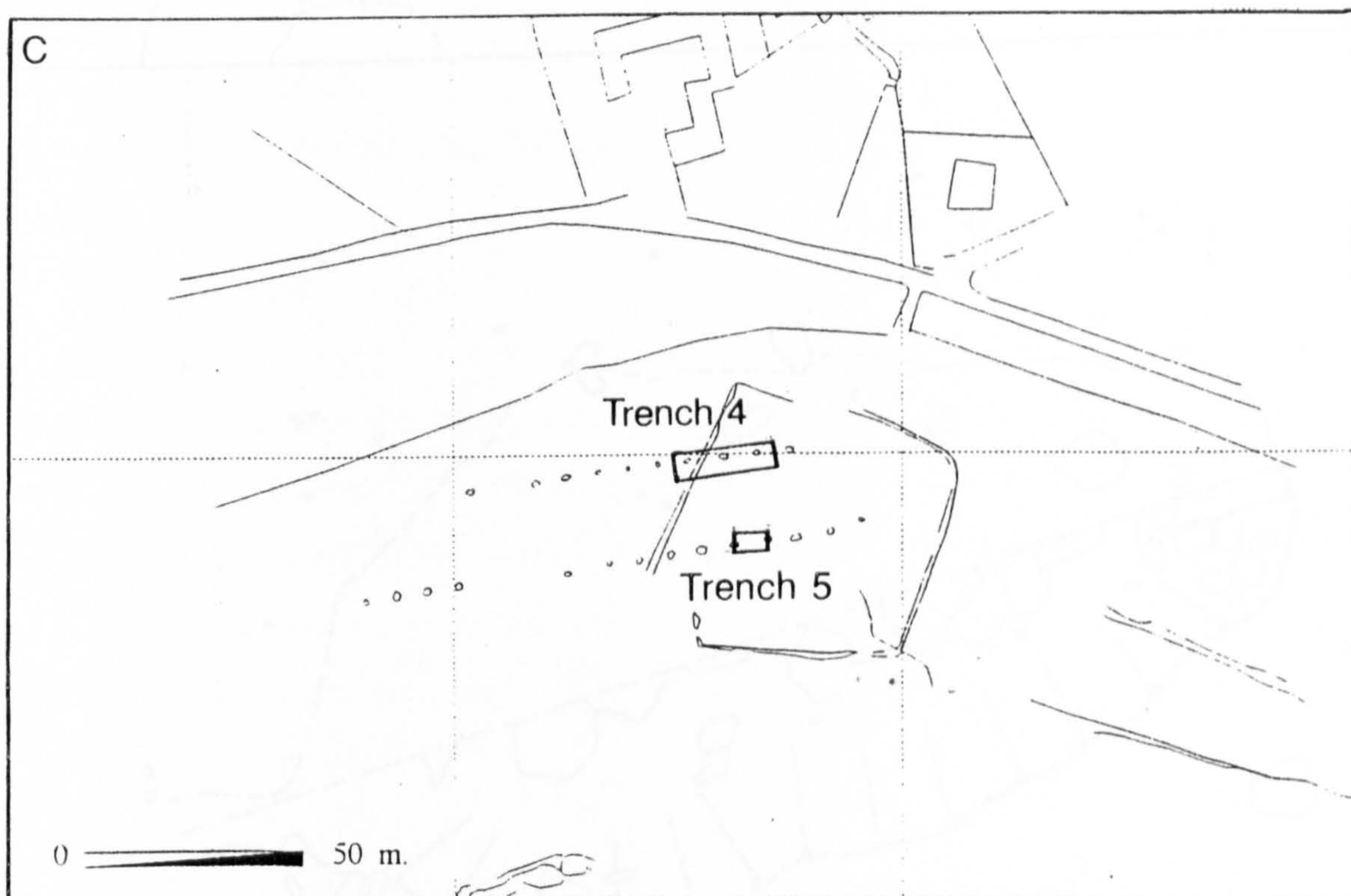
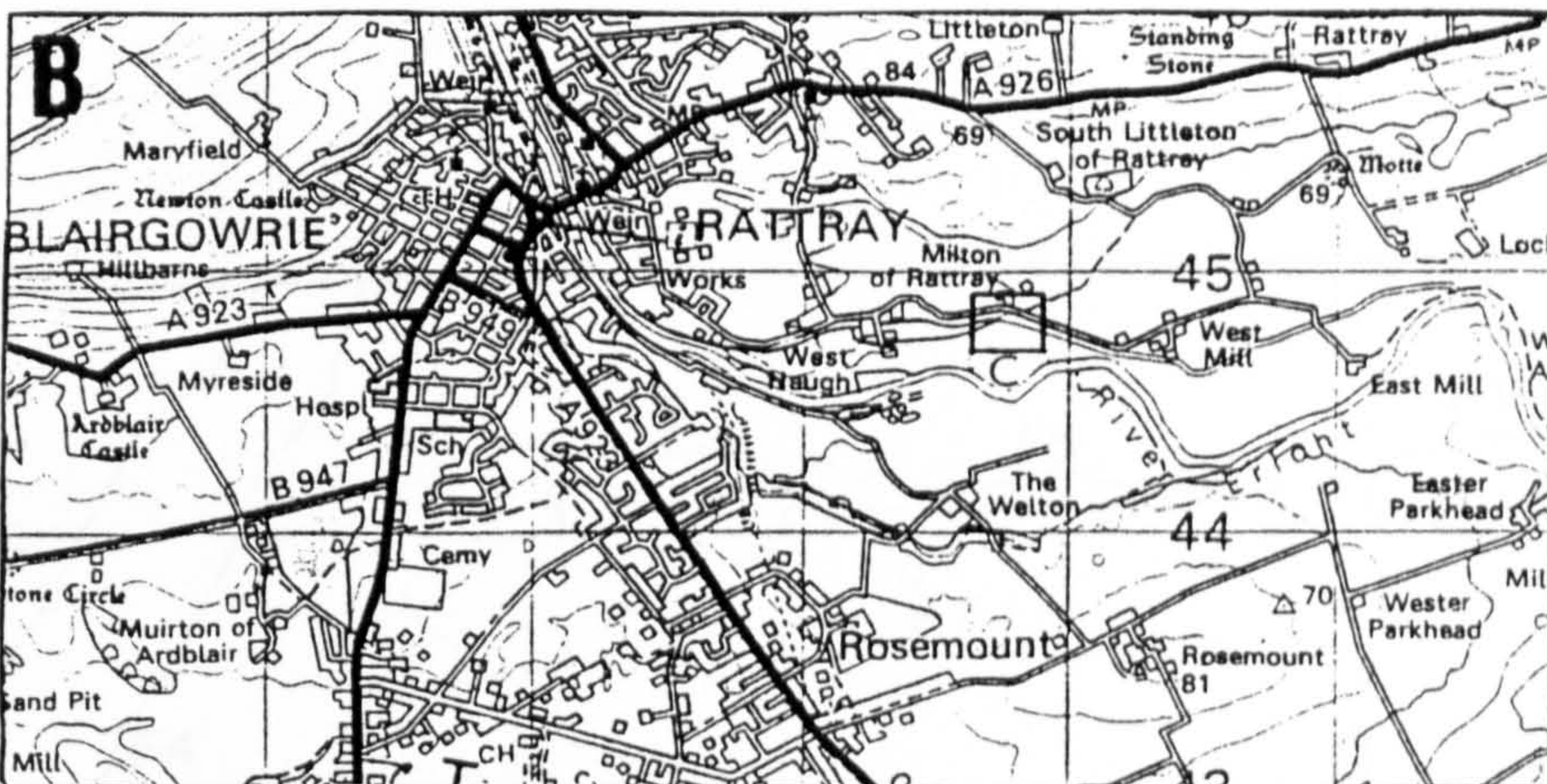
**A**

Figure 6.7 **A** and **B** show the location of Milton of Rattray. **C** is the transcription of the cropmarks.



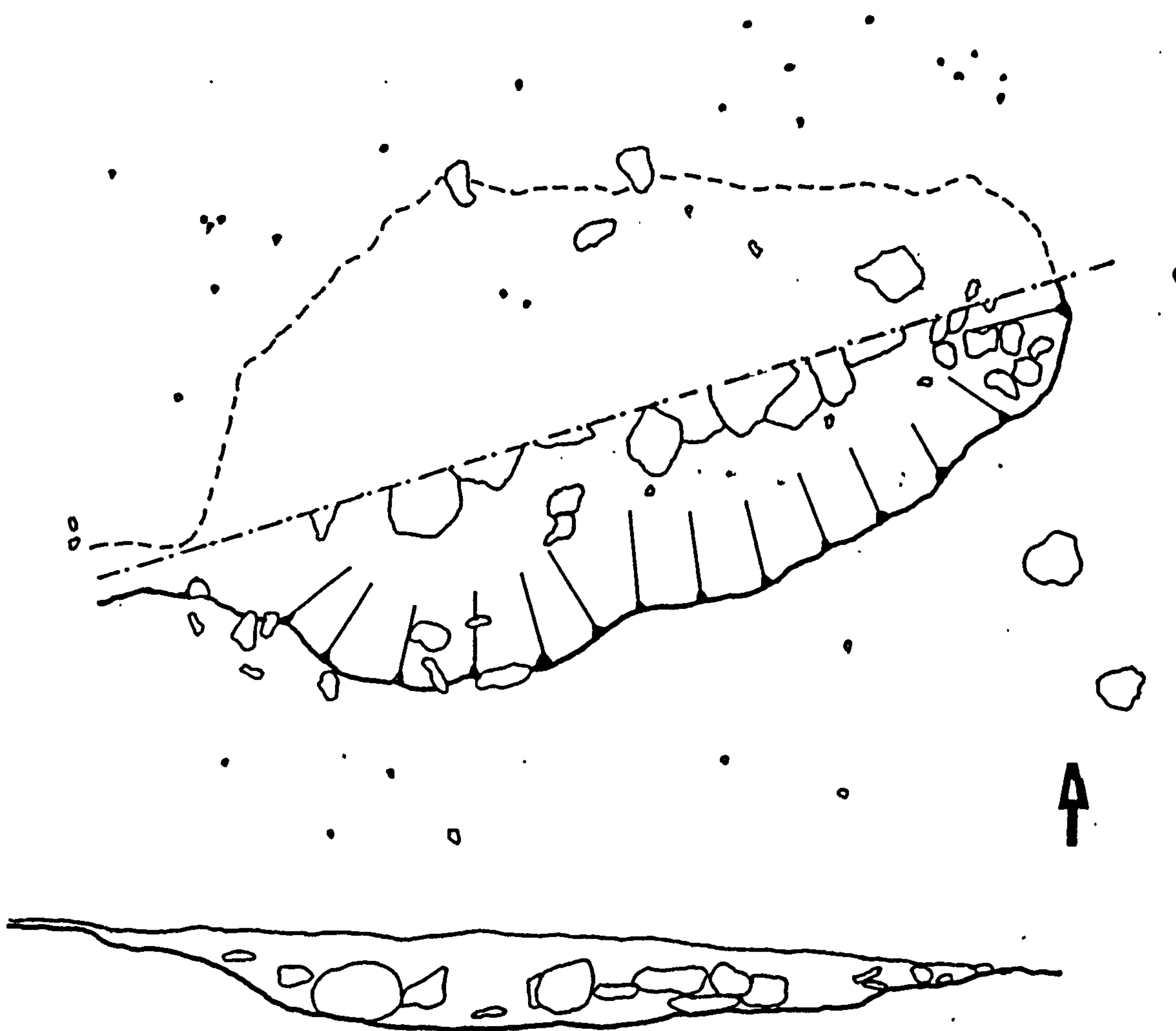
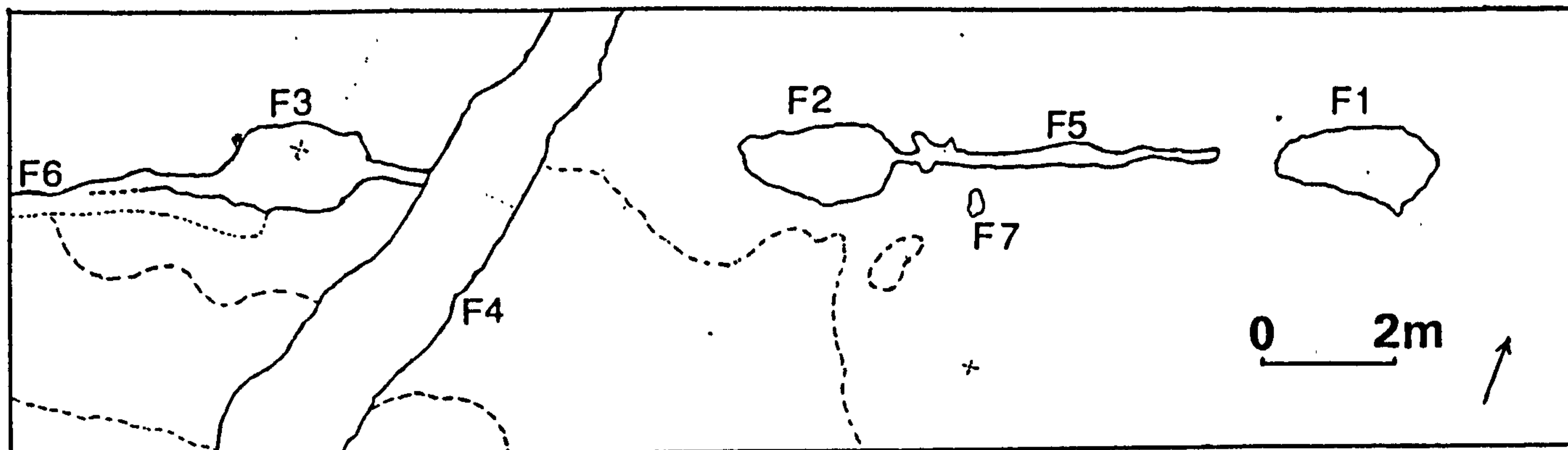


Figure 6.8 (top) Milton of Rattray 1998. Pre-excavation drawing of trench 4.

Figure 6.9 Plan and longitudinal section of pit F2 and linear feature F5 (at 1.20)



A similar deposit or layer to the pit fill over in trench 2 was identified, but no distinct edges could be found, and it did not appear to correspond to the shape of feature we were looking for.

The farmer has been on the site many times, with frustrating lack of things to show or tell him.

*Has anyone seen a site like this before?* KB. Daybook.

*Day 4. Warm, dry.*

Work continued today in all three trenches.

Trench 1 was returned to, and completely cleaned again and trowelled by RL, in case any features were drying through. None were found. It is clear that although this trench had one motivation in its location - to investigate the visible cropmark features - its erroneous positioning meant instead that we had a key-hole excavation of the interior of the monument. Nothing was really expected here, and this small exploratory hand-dug trench showed that there were no features in area, but not that there were no features elsewhere in the interior, an extrapolation too far.

The section of F003 was drawn, and after much discussion, was re-labelled with context number 005 for the cut. The rest of the feature was then excavated out with nothing further added to our knowledge of it. Work today again seemed to suggest that the uniform fill (004) may have been a deliberate one event backfill, with a series of relatively large rocks in the central area of the fill sitting proud of the subsoil rather than against it, but also within the clay fill itself, part of the fill. I felt at the time that these stones may have been part of packing for a post, but this met with little enthusiasm (this interpretation may have been shaped by initial preconceptions and previous experiences). Recording was hampered by photographs taken with the north arrow pointing in the wrong direction. These had to be taken again.



A rather significant discovery was made, purely by chance, in the extreme western corner of the trench, although at the time was dismissed. A slightly raised area of clay material, very similar to the fill of the pit, was uncovered after initial cleaning, close to the western end of the pit. "...the patch of clay at the W corner appears to be just a band within the subsoil, just above the gravel" according to my daybook. It even appears in my first sketch of the trench, labelled 'another bit?', but has disappeared by the post-excavation sketch. It worried me (but no one else I think) that these bands of clay were everywhere, and somehow our feature was natural. When it proved to be such an ephemeral feature after a brisk trowel, I saw it as an indication that our much more substantial 'pit' was not natural. I did, however, promise to return and extend the trench here if we ever returned.

We continued to expand and clean trench 3, with little success in identifying any pit feature. It was clear that what we were looking for is something exactly like what we had already uncovered in trench 3, and so we may have missed something which looked different. The trench was cleaned carefully, and we identified a setting of flat stones on the subsoil, defining a roughly oval shape, and sloping in towards on another. Perhaps this was the second pit, and the clay spread was the plough disturbed fill of this feature. It was decided that a *sondage* through this yellow clay was necessary, to establish whether this was a pit, a natural deposit, or the spread of pit fill.

Discussions of the nature of the pits continued. Further ideas - that they were tree throws, or that they represented an extremely causewayed ditch - were put forward.

*Day 5. Warm, sunny.*

Work on the site was completed today, which was really only a half-day. The main objectives of the day were to complete the post-excavation plan of trench 2, and to work on the *sondage* and recording in trench 3. We were unsure if this was going to be the only season of work here, and only today, with the farmer's kind



kind offer of the use of a machine to open larger trenches, did I begin to think it would be practical financially and worthwhile archaeologically.

There was an argument about how the planning in trench 2 should be undertaken.

AB - "On removing part of the fill (010) from the suspected pit in trench 3, it was apparent that this material was very similar to that which we had encountered previously in the context of the first pit. This was both encouraging, in the sense that we seemed to have developed a good practical appreciation of how features on the site were likely to look, and disappointing in that the material removed was similarly sterile, lacking any trace of artefacts, charcoal or environmental material. The distinction between the cut of the feature and its fill was very marked. Although it was only partially excavated at this stage, the shallow profile and flat base of the feature suggested something very similar to the first pit"

Packing away the equipment was slightly slowed by the fact that I hit my head on a car door and drew blood. After that I was reduced to lifting light items like pencils and rulers, whilst the others carried spades, the barrow and other heavy tools.

### *Post-excavation*

The dig had revealed precious little to work with. There were no indications of a date at all, and no artefactual evidence either. Circulation of the interim report lead to little or no new suggestions, apart from ideas for near parallels, which upon examination were helpful but it seems clear that nothing quite like this - a parallel pair of alignments of elongate ditches - had been excavated before. I was relieved, of course, that this was not something really quite obvious which I had simply failed to recognise.

Perhaps the most promising line of enquiry was the idea of the pit being a tree-throw, mooted by several people on site or upon reading the interim. A possible



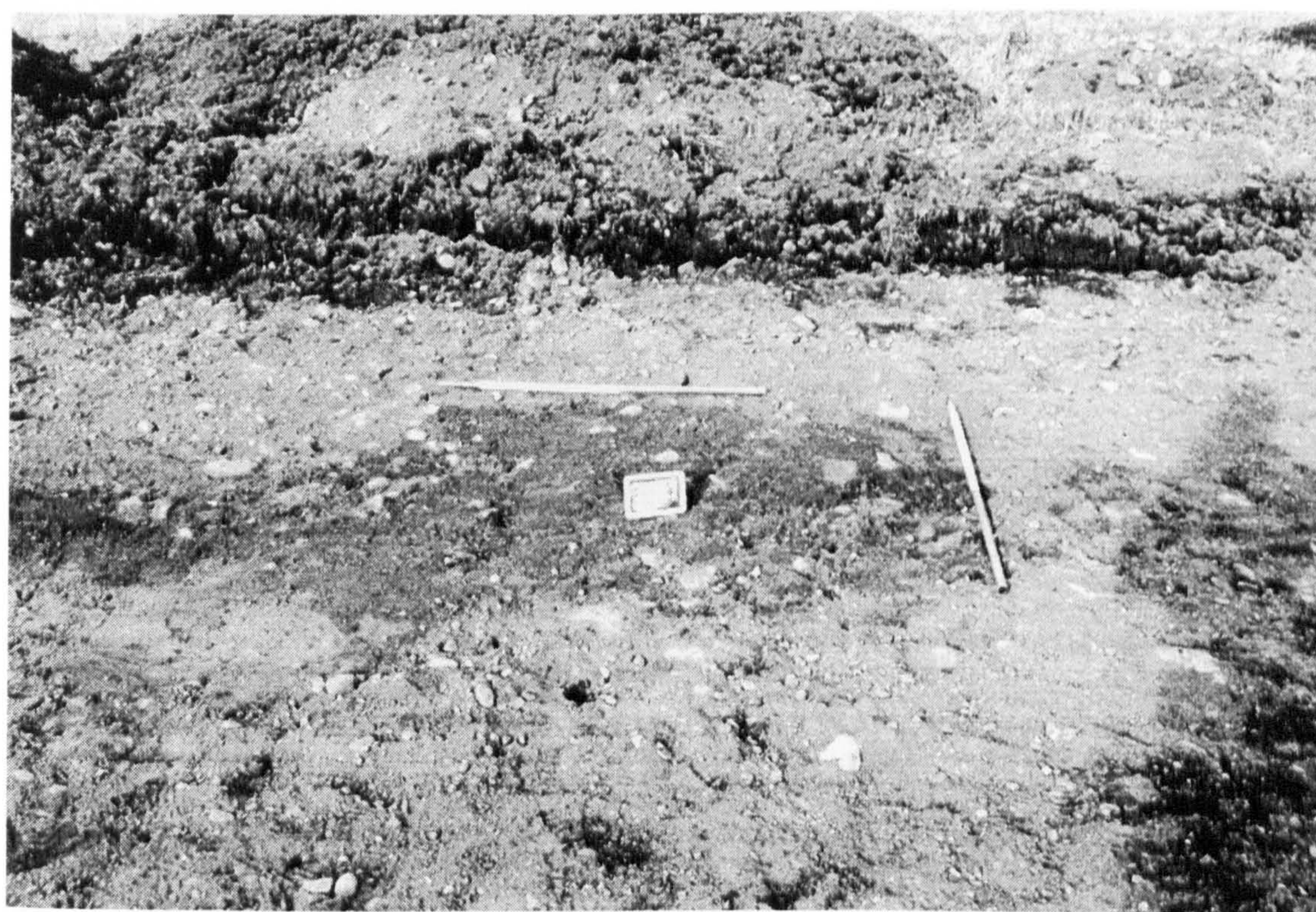
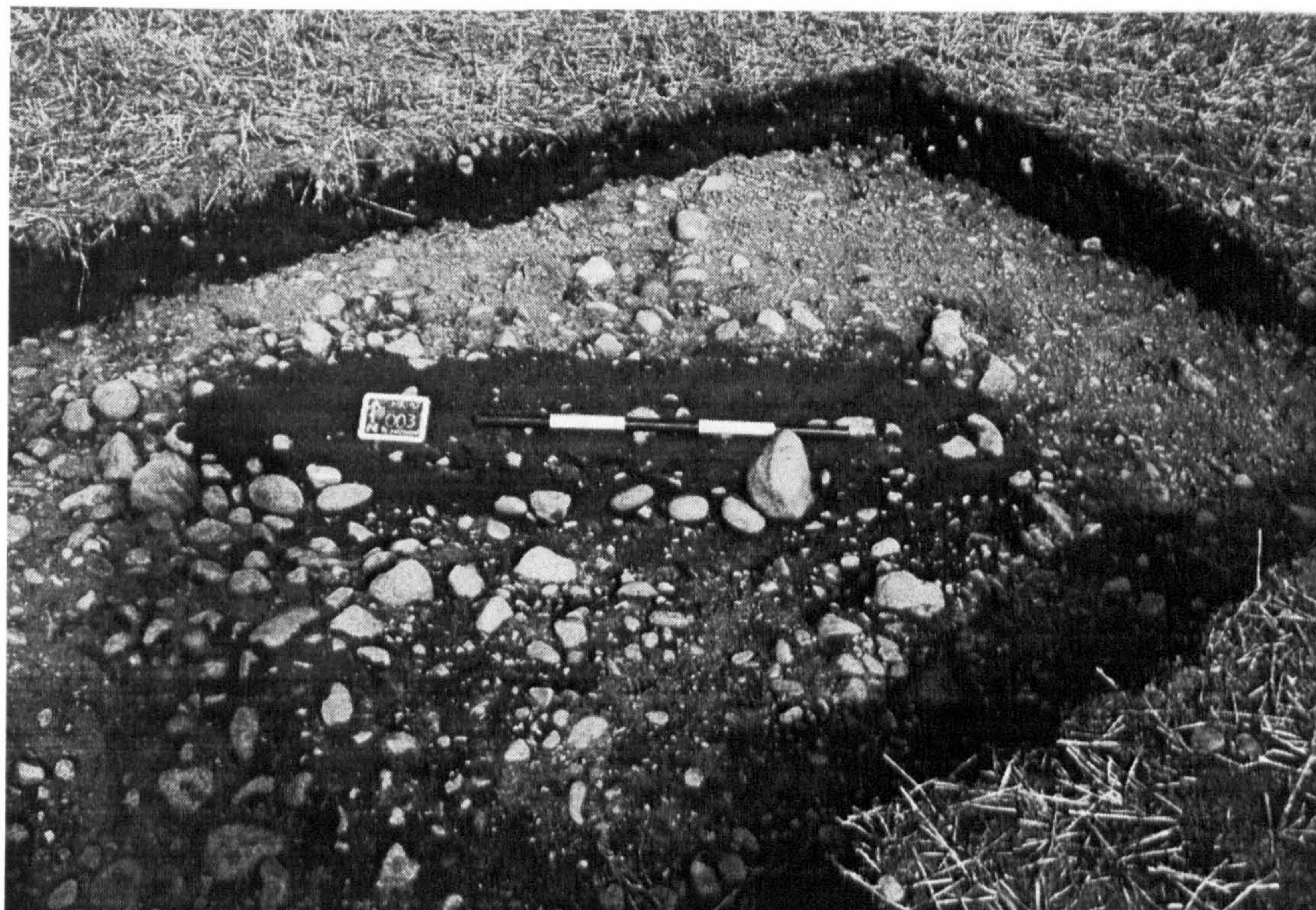


Plate 6.27 (top) Milton of Rattray 1997. South facing section of pit F1.

Plate 6.28 (bottom) Milton of Rattray 1998. Pre-excavation photograph of pit F3 taken from the south.



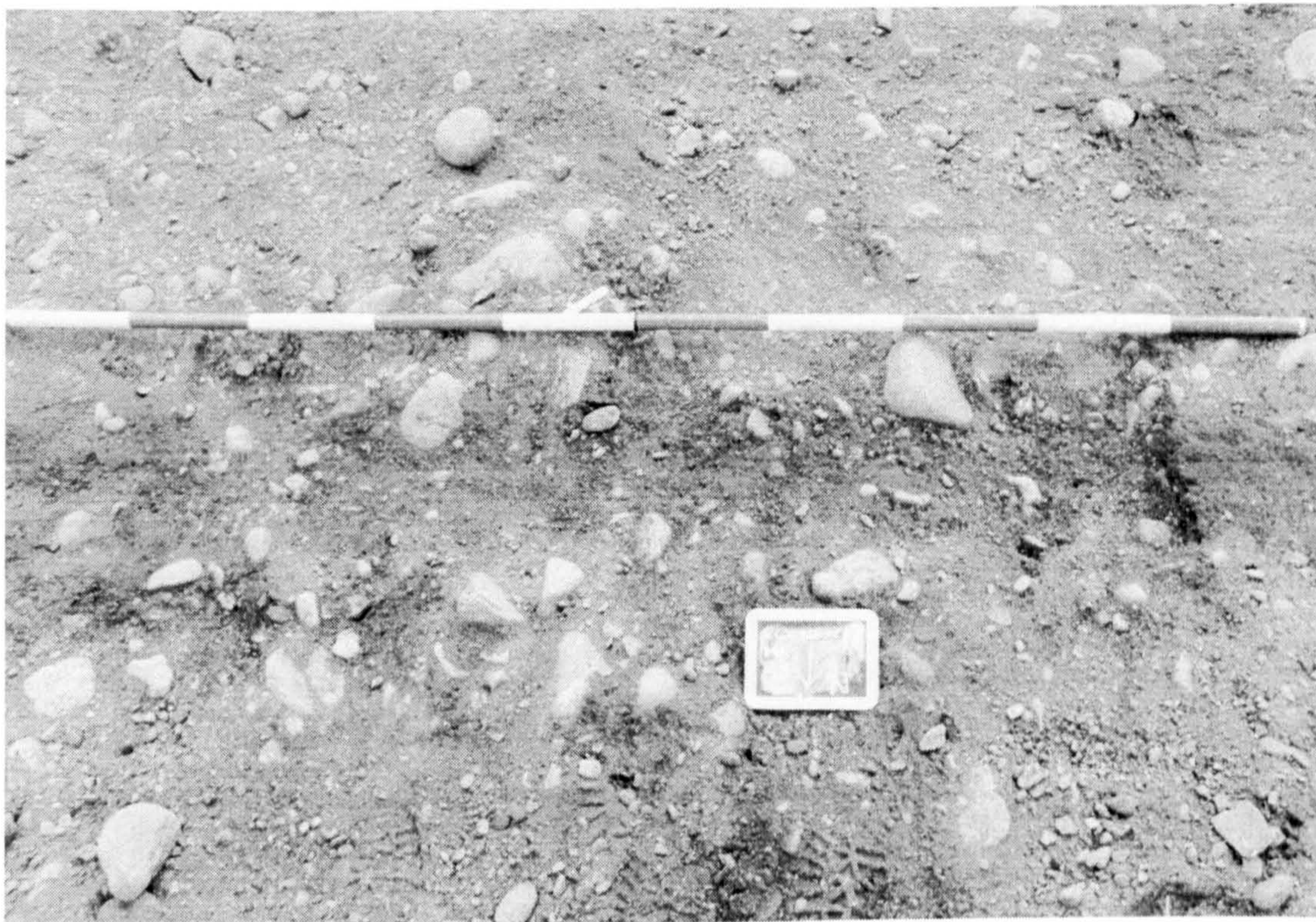


Plate 6.29 (top) Milton of Rattray 1998. Post-excavation photograph of the slot. Note how ephemeral the feature is.

Plate 6.30 (bottom) Milton of Rattray 1998. Post-excavation photograph of the section taken from the ditch **F4** . The slot is cut by it on the far side of the ditch.



tree-throw pit of fairly similar dimensions was uncovered at North Straiton, Fife, although the fills were more complicated. A Neolithic date was recovered from this feature (Carter 1996). Barclay (pers. comm.) felt that the pit was too clean cut for this, but the notion that this was a pair of parallel lines of trees cannot be ruled out (Rideout pers. comm.) Certainly, this appealed to ideas of a close relationship between the architectural form ('cursus') and the natural world (trees) already represented in the nearby river. This could even be placed into some kind of cursus continuum.

It seems obvious at least that these were not natural features. Other possibilities - graves, quarry pits, simple truncated post-holes, rubbish pits and so - could not be totally discounted either, and we felt that a second season, to more closely investigate the relationship between a series of pits on both sides of the 'enclosure', and other cropmarks in the same field was necessary.

I was very disappointed by this first season, because the site had not lived up to my expectations. We had not found what I expected (hoped). But it also forced me to realise that as archaeologists we should be excited by the challenge of the unknown, not the familiar. I was contented with the reality that the report for the dig was not going to simply conclude that we had excavated a cursus.

### *Second season (24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> February 2000). Pre-excavation.*

The post-excavation research, correspondence and debate between us led to a series of aims for the second season, already outlined above. The opportunity of having access to a JCB to machine open a trench gave us the opportunity to look at the slightly bigger picture, although serious funding constraints meant that time was very limited. A late drop-out by a member of the team made things more difficult still, and we had to carefully assess how large an area to open, to get the maximum information without wastefully exposing the archaeology. In the end we settled for a slight extension of the areas of trench 2 and 3 to join them, and also to continue the trench westwards to include another pit feature and a possible ditch, in an area where Gordon had successfully probed last



September. A smaller trench was positioned on the southern alignment to catch two further pits and the area between.

Hope for the second season were limited. What I at best expected was to confirm that there was a good likelihood that all the pit features visible as cropmarks were these elongate single fill pits. Dating evidence would be nice, or some artefacts. However, I was rather pessimistic of showing anything beyond what we already expected, although there always was some hope that the little clay intrusion into the corner of trench 2 may have been part of some between-pit archaeology. All thoughts of post pipes or charcoal stumps had long ago disappeared. Nevertheless, the small team of dedicated diggers that we were (three in all) were determined to work hard and at least get the number of contexts into double figures.



Plate 6.31 Milton of Rattray 1998. Looking west across the unexcavated features in trench 5.





Plate 6.32 Milton of Rattray 1998. The unexcavated trench 5, viewed from the west.



*We will once more go unto the breach, once more, my friends, for another season in the site which quite literally is the pits. I've got a little bit more cash, and an all new caravan, so why the hell not come along and offer your new labour free. We'll be leaving Glasgow in the white minibus on the Tuesday morning, returning on the Thursday evening. Bring a trowel and a towel. (Extract from guide to the excavation for diggers prepared by KB).*

*Day 1. Warm and dry.*

The first day was primarily used to supervise the machine driver as he opened new trenches. Like so many drivers, he took great pride in cleaning carefully down to the subsoil, and constructing a tidy spoil heap. (I enjoy watching them at work so much I almost forget about the archaeology. The driver who reconstructed the central bank of the Cleaven Dyke from spoil was an artist). The rest of the day was spent hoeing, and then trowelling the northern trench clean (dubbed trench 4). The sketch made of what we could see was the basis of the plans for the next two days (fig. 10.3) and it is surprisingly accurate. It was today that we realised that the feature which we thought was natural in the corner of trench 2 was not after all.

My sketch, from our discussions on site, shows three elongate pits (one of them cut 004 from the first season) joined by a slightly irregular, intermittent and narrow slot. A wider ditch seemed to cut across this line towards the west end of the trench. We had no time to clean the southern trench (trench 5) that day.

*Day 2. Cold, windy, dry.*

The following morning, the trench had dried out sufficiently for us to see that the features we had sketched were, with the exception of a small dark soily patch, the only ones in the northern trench. We decided firstly to leave trench 5 to the following day, and then concentrated on the pre-excavation planning and photography in trench 4. The cuts of the pits were assigned, from east to west,



005 (excavated 1997), 012 and 014. These would be excavated by half-sectioning, one longitudinally.

The narrow linear feature seemed to connect 005 and 012, with a small gap at the edge of the former, which I suspected had been trowelled or ploughed away. There was no evidence of this feature running east of 005, again either a product of recent human activity, or perhaps this was a break or entrance. Between 012 and 014 the feature was partially present, running from 014 to the ditch cutting across the site and trench, but not seemingly beyond. Again, it continued unbroken westwards from 014 to the edge of the trench. We decided to sample its nature with various sections and profiles, and to investigate the relationships it shared with one of the pits, and the ditch, which we suspected was later. The nature of the slot was intriguing, and it again raised the possibility that the site consisted of a pair of continuous boundaries, very cursiform.

In the afternoon, SMc half-sectioned pit (012) longitudinally, and found it to be of similar character to (005), right down to the interesting large stone inclusions in the centre of an otherwise uniform fill. There was also a small quantity of modern pottery within the fill. This included sherds of a saucer with a delightful swirling pattern of yellow, brown and blue. Although this is concerning, it could also easily be explained by plough disturbance of the fill, and we had found similar ceramics in the topsoil.

Preliminary excavation began of the linear feature (013) to the east of (012). SMc removed a section of 1m length along this slot, and then completely removed the fill of the feature. It was shown to be extremely ephemeral, with a depth of no more than 12cm and an irregular width averaging 40cm. The sides were fairly steep, the bottom flat. The fill itself seemed to be very similar to that found in the pits. The slot itself had no internal features such as stake-holes as far as we could discern.



*Site is bizarre, and none of us have a clue about what it could possibly be, but perhaps not Neolithic?* KB, daybook.

Perhaps one of the most persistent debates surrounding the excavation amongst the team has been a term to describe the linear features between the pits, ever since their character was revealed today. *Linear feature* itself is rather long-winded, but other terms are either too loaded or not quite right. Although we settled on *channels* in the interim reports, this was only after the rejection of *ditches* (too small to be ditches) and *slots* (there is no evidence that anything was slotted in them). *Linear stretches* also appeared a draft of the interim report, but presumably was a victim of the editorial process.

*Day 3. Cold, windy.*

Investigation continued into the relationship between 012 (pit) and 013 (linear feature).

SMc - "The shallow linear feature would appear to be current with the 'pit' feature (012) as there appears to be no discernible differentiation between their respective fills".

GJB half-sectioned the third pit to be excavated (014). It was sub-circular in shape, 2.2m by 1.3m in size with a maximum depth of 35cm. There appeared to be two fills. (022) appears identical to fills from the other linear features (004, 017), but immediately above it was a slightly darker brown fill with the same texture (019). The linear feature adjoins both ends of the pit.

The relationship between linear feature 014 and the linear ditch which cuts across it (016) was investigated by AB - "Both of these features appeared to have the same fill – the yellowish clay identified within the pits elsewhere on the site, and it was difficult to differentiate between them, especially given the rather changeable lighting, which altered the appearance of the sections every few



minutes. However, although the section was somewhat overcut due to this problem of visibility, it eventually became clear that the ditch (016) had been cut into and across the shallow linear feature (014). This was the expected outcome, as the view of the site in the air photographs suggested that the ditched feature must have post-dated the 'cursus'. It is also likely that my interpretation of these features was conditioned by a prior belief that rectilinear enclosures are likely to be later than 'Neolithic' sites such as the 'cursus'".

A second section of the linear feature (015) was excavated by AB - "this confirmed its insubstantial character, as it was found to be as shallow here as in the first section. The fill was also equally devoid of artefacts or other manufactured material. This was the expected result of this section, and therefore not as disappointing as our previous failures to find either the substantial features suggested by the air photographs, or any dateable material within them".

As I had damaged my thumb in the van door incident, I was reduced to planning on this final day. I also cleaned and planned trench 5, where drying had indicated a similar pattern to the northern trench, with two long elongate pits, joined by a linear feature. In this case, this was especially sinuous, much more so than anywhere else we had recorded it, and again, there was a gap between this and one of the pits. Whether this was real or not is unknown, but trowelling was very limited in this trench. Unfortunately, there was no time to excavate these features, only to record in plan and photograph.

#### *Post-excavation.*

This second season was beyond our expectations. We have evidence of stratigraphy, the pit alignment and contemporary adjoining feature being earlier than the linear ditch (and presumably the linear cropmark which runs parallel to it). The ephemeral nature of the features may well be the result of truncation, although the field had only been under cultivation for sixty years.



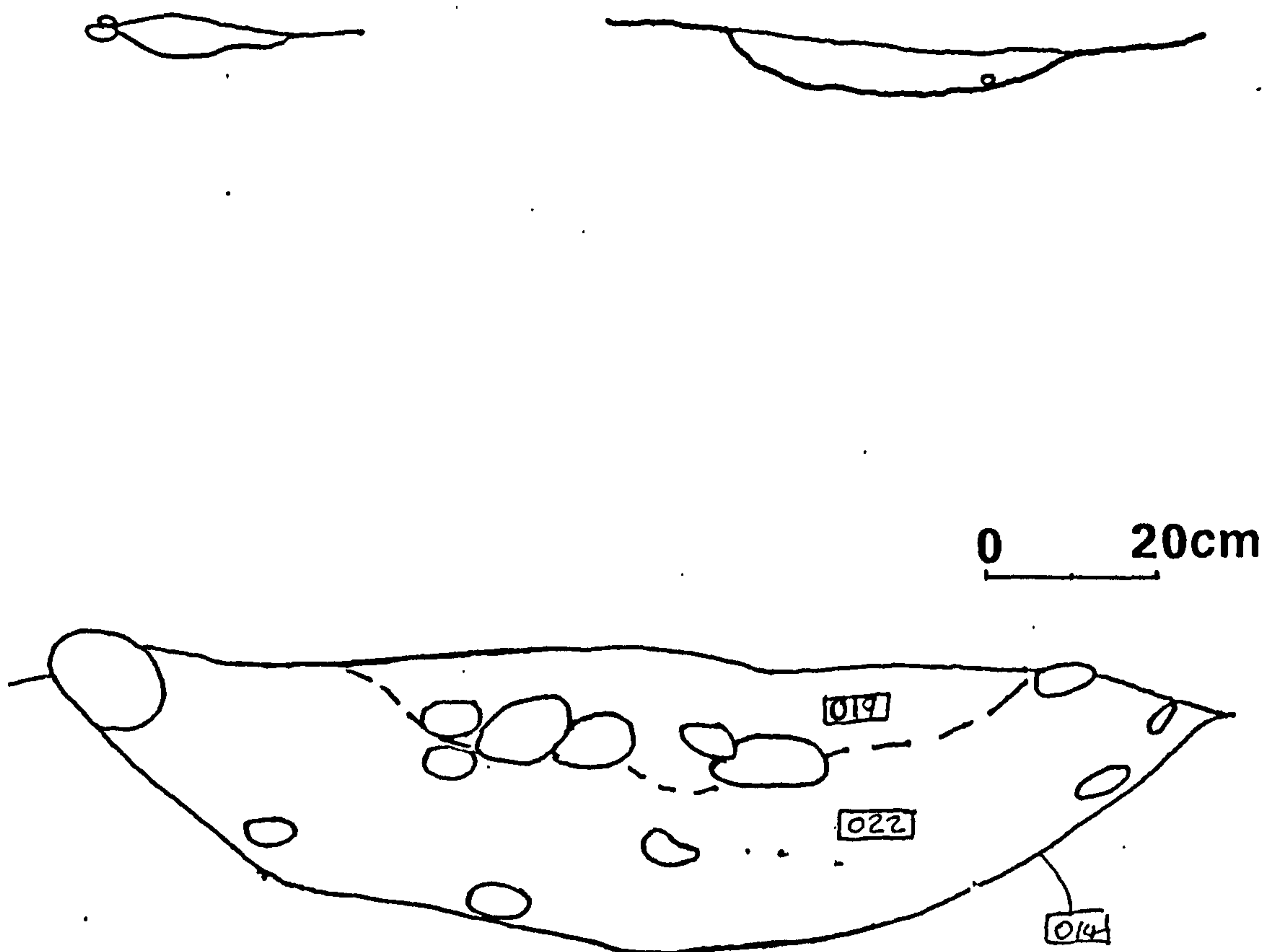


Figure 6.10 Cross sections of linear features F5 and F6 (at 1:10)

Figure 6.11 (bottom) Milton of Rattray 1998. East-facing section (014) showing the two fills (019, 022).



Are we any closer to working out what the pits and linear features were? They share alignments and cuts and fills, and seem to be intrinsically related. I still hold out hope that the concentration of several large stones in the centre of each of the pit fills may suggest a post once stood within these pits, and on the present evidence, they must have been removed again, rather than being burnt, to allowed to rot, *in situ*. The rather romantic vision of a tree-lined avenue is slightly weakened by the features between the pits, which sit uneasily with this notion, but it has also been suggested that these were merely lain out to as a guide to placing the pits in a straight line (AB and Jim Rideout pers. comm.). Re-evaluation of the air photos, however, indicate that at least one of the pit alignments is not straight, but in fact curves towards one end.

The interpretation of a cursus (that is, some kind of Neolithic linear site) is neither strengthened nor weakened by either season. We can still postulate a parallel pair of pit or post-alignments, in a location near water, and there is even a chance it was a fenced, or continuous, feature. What it could mean is another matter altogether. (See chapters 7-9, this volume).

The excavation was very satisfying for all involved (I hope), and this involvement has included pre-excavation, digging and recording, and post-excavation. Perhaps if we were doing it again, we would take more samples (still being processed), and we would have tried to get more funding for the second season (or at least more help). However, I think that we have tried to excavate one of the more mysterious cropmark sites of Perthshire, and with very limited resources, have targeted successfully an area which has told us much about the physical character of the monument if not the origins.

The cropmarks here were scheduled two days after the excavations were completed, and will probably not be excavated again. Nevertheless, I think that we have added another chapter to the biography of this place, however old it is, and whatever it meant to whoever dug it originally. GSM and I flew over the site



in August 1998, a full six months after the dig finished. The only cropmarks we spotted in the field that day were the outline of our trenches.

### 6.16. Summing up

This chapter has been, I hope, eclectic, in that these are experiences that I have had alone or have shared with others. They have had various degrees of intimacy (the detached view from the Cessna 172 to the trowel point) and have reflected sites with a wide range of morphological variations. It may well be argued that much of what I have recounted here is of little use to archaeology as a whole, that these accounts are solipsistic and generally meaningless to anybody except myself. The excavation report is not written in a form acceptable to, say, a commercial unit.

The title of this collection, *cursus* stories, is not meant to trivialise these accounts but to put them firmly into the realms of detached subjective observations and interpretations. Nor does it mean that I am trying to create fictions or that these are fictional accounts. Instead, I have tried to describe as best I can my feelings about these sites, why I visited them, even what I expected to find. These preconceptions shape experiences and so does the weather or anything else which might effect my mood and the so the way I encounter these places.

Most of all, the title tells of the fact that I (and Andrew, Dougie, Gordon, Sam and others) are now part of the story of each *cursus* we have visited or excavated or whatever. There is an irony where we are contributing a little bit to the *cursus* story through our stories yet, all along, we are part of the story.

These descriptions will feed directly into the following interpretative chapters. There has been a fair amount of interpretation involved in this chapter, before, during and after the fieldwork. However, observations made in these stories have also helped in more general interpretations of these sites which will be discussed in the following three chapters. These experiences will be returned to and



## Theory and fieldwork

observations and interpretations made, often of the same site. I hope to show that my narratives can be of use in a wider archaeological context.



**PART 3. INTERPRETATIONS**



## 7. Landscape themes

### 7.1. 'Themes'

Archaeologists, as mentioned several times before in this volume, have a tendency to divide up aspects of the past at various levels, usually in terms which are particular to our society. This includes the very general division of culture - nature, which is essentially taken as a given dichotomy in archaeological literature. The discipline is concerned with the cultural exploitation and manipulation of the natural, one the user, the other the used. This is reflected in the varying conceptions of landscape.

This chapter, and the one which follows it, reflect on this perceived (and arbitrary) opposition. This chapter deals with natural things (landscape), and chapter 8 with cultural things (architecture and material culture). I hope that it becomes clear that this division is at no point as distinct as these bald chapter headings suggest. Rather, by looking at some aspects of the *cursus* monuments themselves, we can begin to see constructional ideas which transcend the two concepts and are concerned more with the daily lives of people in the world, rather than any over-arching nature - culture scheme. The overlapping relationship between the two could be seen as one of transformation and paradox, ideas which recur in this section. To emphasise this the themes discussed in this chapter and the next will be drawn together in a series of possible interpretations of the sites themselves.

This chapter is constructed from a series of observations, sometimes based on a few sites, sometimes on a large number of them. A mixture of interpretation is thrown in, rather than completely detached from the evidence. These are drawn from the fieldwork experiences related in the previous chapter as well as dialogues during walks, excavation results and looking at *cursus* sites outwith Scotland. These closely related observations and interpretations will be grouped into various themes related to what could be viewed as the involvement of the natural world in *cursus* construction, ideology and usage, and these will be



closely echoed by the themes of cursus construction discussed in the following chapter. The themes highlighted can be summarised as the mimicry and incorporation of topographical features into cursus architecture, the relationships shared by these sites and water, the role of colour, light, shadow and reflection in the meaning of these sites, and finally, a brief discussion of alignments and mis-alignments.

### 7.2. Landscape and place

The natural world seems easy to define. It is everything we, as humans, are not responsible for creating (a tree can be natural, a car could not be). However, the boundaries are far more ambiguous than that, and always have been for humans. We have domesticated animals and crops, we have genetically modified tomatoes and cloned sheep, and we shape and alter our own bodies. However, there may be (or have been) societies where people see no distinction between the cultural and natural at all, unlike ours. As archaeologists, we all too often assume that the distinction was recognised and regarded as important by our forebears.

Landscape as a concept has transformed over the last thirty years. Archaeologists had for a long time seen the natural world as an economic resource, to be exploited by humans, and increasingly efficiently exploited at that, especially for Processualists. It was part of the system of human society (Clarke 1968). Landscape could be divided into arbitrary chunks, reflecting the territories of social groupings centred on the locations of tombs (Renfrew 1976). The crisis of society causing the distinction between *domus* and *agrios*, according to Hodder (1990), was precipitated by the development of enclosure and monumentality across Europe. This was fuelled by the advent of agriculture, people no longer at one and safe with nature. (The relationship with the landscape changed for them). More recently, the development of society in later prehistory is seen as a transformation from people being at one with nature and part of it to being exploiters and dominators of it (Bender 1992).



Landscape and the natural world have now, more than ever, entered into archaeological discourse. It is increasingly seen as much more than a passive (or inscribed) background or as an exploited food source. Instead, it is viewed as been inhabited, fluid, a participant in social discourse, and even part of how people defined themselves. Recent publications by archaeologists of various intellectual schools testify to the importance now placed on landscape as a place and idea. Most have concentrated on Britain's later prehistoric, and anthropological, landscapes (see for instance Bender 1992, 1993, 1998; Tilley 1994, 1996; Richards 1996; Topping 1997; Ucko & Layton 1999; Brophy forthcoming a and b; and various others).

So what is landscape? How would you define it? It could be assigned a bland dictionary definition of a sentence or two (Cosgrove 1993), or a short essay in an encyclopaedia. But it could also be described differently by all of us, in a personal, meaningful way. More than any recent archaeological buzz-word, landscape defies a clear definition, being more like a collections of ideas and experiences, a product perhaps of post-modernism. The only consistent meaning is that it is consistently meaningful. The word, like the ideas it conveys, has changed emphasis in archaeological discourse, from background to foreground, and moved from the geological-topographical-setting-the-scene section or chapter, to part of the interpretation itself. When considering archaeological places, we cannot ignore the landscape.

Aston (1992) has written the standard modern glossy textbook (for archaeologists) on the English landscape, *Interpreting the Landscape*. In the introduction, he discusses the different places he had lived in over the previous decade involving emotions, personal detail, opinion and nostalgia. "Where was our Medieval parish church...?", "the generally unattractive appearance of the village", "...a small nondescript bungaloid village outside Bristol" (*ibid.* 9-10). These brief anecdotes are his way of illustrating that 'the past is all around us', even as we commute, from improvement field-scapes to really old houses. Implicitly, he is also revealing the personal nature of places, of memories,



feelings, stereotypes, class, and the detached modern short-termism of employment and living places we all now experience - yet he never acknowledges this. For him, landscape is where we live, eat, work and move about in, and that is all.

A place is not merely a bounded area of space or a container - it is that place but also much more, involving the feelings, meanings and memories attached to it (Relph 1976). Landscape is a personal and social space divided into places and locations of particular significances. Through such ideas as place and placelessness and the differentiation of space (*ibid.*; Tilley 1994) and topophilia (Taun 1974), coupled with ethnographic examples of the special places people inhabit, visit and tell stories about, we can move from Aston's non-reflective passive landscape, to meaningful multivocal landscapes and places. Indeed, the landscape rôle of the cursus in formalising pathways and linking places has become the defining late 1990's statement on this monument type (Tilley 1994; Brophy 1995; Barclay & Harding 1999b), a post-modern take on the much rehearsed processional way theory (see chapter 4).

Indeed, it is the relationship between landscape and monuments that has been to the fore in recent years. Bender, for instance, out-lined six important points that we must consider in looking at monument complexes, in this case highlighting the Stonehenge area. These themes are worth quoting in full. They are "(1) the indivisibility of nature and culture; (2) conceptual boundaries within the landscape; (3) the possibility that, on occasion, the act may be more important the material result; (4) differential experience over the landscape; (5) contested landscapes, and (6) the appropriation of, over and over again, the past landscapes" (1992, 742). At the time, this was a completely new way for archaeologists to think.

Take her first point, a way of looking at the world alien to our Western modern world view. Bender suggests that no such dichotomy existed in the Neolithic and this can be played out most visibly through monuments, with topography adding



to their architecture or being referenced by the sites in some way. We can see this through monuments aligning on hilltops or even in the materiality of sites - earthworks, timber posts, standing stones, made of earth, timber and stone.

Bradley (1991) defines certain places as 'natural monuments', dating back to the Mesolithic when people supposedly had no monuments. The slight alteration of a tree through carving, or of creating some rock art, or piling small stones in special places, all were acts of marking special places in the landscape for whatever reason. Bradley suggests three ways in which this phenomena manifested itself which are reminiscent of Bender's ideas, and have been echoed in the work of others.

Firstly, there is the use of topography, as a focus for deposits or the subject of some kind of embellishment. Topographically spectacular locations and features, or waterways, became the focus for deposits of artefacts or bones. Another level of interaction is noted by Tilley who suggests that the striking tors in the Dartmoor landscape were places with names and the foci of story-telling and 'ritual' activity. He saw them as 'non-domesticated megaliths' (1996). This repeats his idea of *locales* in the landscape discussed already in relation to his phenomenology of landscape (Tilley 1994).

Secondly, there is linearity. Monuments have been discovered to align on obvious landscape features (as well as the things they aligned on which we can never see). Sites are clustered along ridgeways, concentrated in special places in the landscape (like Rudston (Harding 1999)) or metaphorically reproducing more distant topographical effects (like the Dorset ridgeway monuments (Tilley 1999)). The linearity of cursus monuments is tied in with this. The enclosures lead between places, intimately related to variations in landscape (Tilley 1994; Brophy 1995; Tilley in Bender 1998), or between worlds (Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina 1998).



Finally, we have the juxtaposition of the natural with the cultural in individual monuments. This can be seen in the ideas of Richards (1996) who suggested that henge ditches were waterlogged, metaphors for the wider landscape. Tors and rock outcrops in Bodmin Moor were embellished with cairns or surrounding rings of stones (Tilley 1996) and on the Dorset ridgeway waterlogged sink-holes surround barrows (Tilley 1999). We can also begin to think about the enclosing of hill-tops by causewayed enclosures.

Monumental landscapes have been shown to show a combination of topographical features and enclosures and tombs, either referencing one another or heightening the power of experiences of the monuments. Walks between and within monuments, as outlined already at the Holywood complex, may involve important events - crossing water, losing visibility of things - or particular encounters (sky-lining, surprises) which are to be found only in specific places or directions of approach. The walk along Dorset cursus involves many of these elements, as does Tilley's fieldwork on Bodmin Moor (1994, 1996). A seamless series of sites are to be encountered where it becomes difficult to tell where the site ends and the landscape begins.

Bradley (1998b) has more recently published a series of photographs of tors and dolmen suggesting that the latter mimic the dramatic granite outcrops. He suggests that the similar appearance and raw materials would have made it difficult to identify which was natural and which was not. In effect, the dolmen look like tors and the tors look like dolmen. (We have to wonder whether such a differentiation was either acknowledged or even important to Neolithic people as Bender (1992) suggests). Bradley suggests that dolmen and tors, mounds and tombs were so similar in appearance that they were assumed to all be works of the ancestors and treated with the relevant respect. They were mis-identified.

In fact, we could go as far as to say that places such as these represent a metaphor for the seamless relationship of humanly constructed monuments and natural places which not only defies superficial differentiation but does not need it. The



## Interpretations

flooded henge monuments were not cultural additions to the landscape but part of the landscape, part of the cycle of water (rain, flood, drain, rain, flood, drain, and so on) and the seasons, just as a stream would be. The growth of vegetation (and need to control this) over such sites would further reflect the enclosure being seamlessly linked to a network of natural special places. Many megalithic monuments become overgrown with lichen and moss after a period of time, looking almost organic.

*Walking upslope towards Castlerigg stone circle, near Keswick in the Lake District, from the eastern side, the stones become visible, one by one, breaking the horizon, dominating the skyline. Closer to the circle (which still looks like a forest of stones) mountains break the horizon on either side of the circle. There is a seamless mass of stone across the visual plane, from mountain to standing stones to mountain again, the stones cut from them, and still the same. Where did one finish and the other one begin?*

*Monuments are after all constructed from the materials of nature, and eventually return to nature. What were they in between?*

These ideas are a sort of intellectual context to some of the observations and interpretations that follow. We are already starting to think about ambiguity - what is natural, what is cultural, and is there any difference in the Neolithic? Monuments are places are monuments. Just as there are no definitive answers to any of the questions this thesis asks so the monuments themselves are not definitive, only ambiguous. But then isn't everything?

### 7.3. The proximity of water

My visits to many of the cursus sites, and desktop work on the remainder, have suggested that there is a close relationship between these sites and water (in the form of rivers and streams). Along with many examples from outwith Scotland, we can identify differing levels of relationship ranging from spatially related



## Interpretations

(close together), to alignments (running parallel or perpendicular to waterways), and more intimate still, river crossings and perhaps even flooded ditches. There are many examples...

The Cleaven Dyke is almost completely surrounded by water, in particular by the Tay and Isla to the south, east and west. Like a few other sites in Scotland, it lies within a U-shape, defined by water. The fourth side (north) is also marked by water (the Lunan Burn), and a 'modern' drainage channel, marking the route of an older stream.

The Holywood water relationships have already been discussed (chapter 6). Holywood 1 cursus aligns on the Cluden Water, and terminates on a natural promontory, overlooking the river valley. The river currently lies 450m south of the cursus terminal. The view today from the cursus to the rivers is obscured by woodland. A stream runs to within 100m of the west of the cursus, the small valley running roughly parallel to the cursus. The stream appears to have been artificially straightened, although the valley it passes through is natural. Holywood 2 cursus terminates to the north on a low, but noticeable promontory, which overlooks the Loch Foot Burn, 150m to the north. The stream isn't visible from the cursus, but its location and valley certainly would have been. Again, although it is aligned on the Twelve Apostles, they are on either side of water, once again the straightened burn which runs south into the Cluden Water.

The location of Holm is spectacular, overlooking the Nith valley with its flooded pools and snakish river. The edge of the flat flood plain is barely 100m from the most north-easterly pit-alignment. Directly to the east the Nith widens substantially for a short distance. Loch Foot Burn lies 150m to the west. Fourmerkland lies just above the Cluden Water a few hundred metres north of the river. The Glengabor Burn runs 200m northwest of the site. The other *cursus* in this area, Gallaberry, sits on the other side of the Nith ( the east ), about 4km northeast of the Holywood area. It has a low lying location, on one of the higher points of the Nith flood plain itself. The current route of the Nith runs about 1km



west of Gallaberry. The *cursus* aligns on the river. The southwest terminal overlooks the river and flood plain.

The Eskdalemuir bank barrow crosses the River White Esk valley. If indeed these earthworks represent one continuous monument it has to be accepted also that this monument crossed (or was crossed by) the White Esk (Fig. 3.7).

Drybridge lies along the 'neck' of a slowly closing meander of the River Irvine. It terminates overlooking the river (plate 6.20). Broich has a very similar location. It directly aligns on the River Earn, which currently runs 150m south of the southern terminal area. The *cursus* sits on the first terrace of the Earn overlooking both the river and flood plain. The location of the southern terminal - literally on the edge of the terrace - gives a dominant view of both (plate 6.4). The *cursus* appears to sit within a large U-shape defined by waterways. The Earn turns north around 600m west of Broich, and a stream (the Hoolet Burn) also runs north - south, 700m to the east. Water, then, lies to the east, west and south - and to the north sits a series of hills, including the Knock of Crieff.



Plate 7.1 View from Holm overlooking the flooded River Nith.



## Interpretations

Old Montrose sits in a very enigmatic position, in the centre of a wide, flat valley, near the mouth of the River South Esk, which culminates at the Montrose Basin, a seasonally flooding marshland area. The location of this *cursus* in relation to both the water (river, marsh, sea) and the topography of this water (valley, coast) is interesting and has already been discussed in relation to the time I have spent there (see section 6.10).

The location of the *cursus* is very dominant, the western terminal overlooking the Little Pow (and the Pow Burn beyond), as well as up the valley. The eastern terminal overlooks the Montrose Basin and the coast beyond, and the course of the *cursus* mirrors both the water flow and the valley topography (running parallel to the valley and river flow). The flooding valley floor is captured in a reconstruction drawing (fig. 7.1).

Other sites also either terminate near, or run close to, water. Monktonhall terminates overlooking a river. The probable location of the southern terminal is 200m north-west at most of the River Esk. The eastern area of Drylawhill lies within 200m of the River Tyne. This may be the mid-point of the larger East Linton *cursus*. It runs parallel to the flow of that river (west-south-west - east-north-east).

Kilmany lies on the valley side of the Motray Water, 250m to the south. Both share a roughly west - east alignment. A second stream passes within 50m of the west side of this site. It has a prominent location, overlooking river and valley.

Blairhall lies 1.3km east of the current course of the Tay. To the north, parallel and close to the *cursus* runs the Gelly Burn and small valley which defines the edge of the plateau on which Blairhall sits, and marks the limit of associated cropmarks. The partially pit-defined, partially ditch-defined set of adjoining enclosures at Mill of Fintray lie on the valley side of the River Don, overlooking it, and running west - east, just as the river does. At the closest point, they are only 200m apart. A stream runs south into the Don, west of the *cursus*.



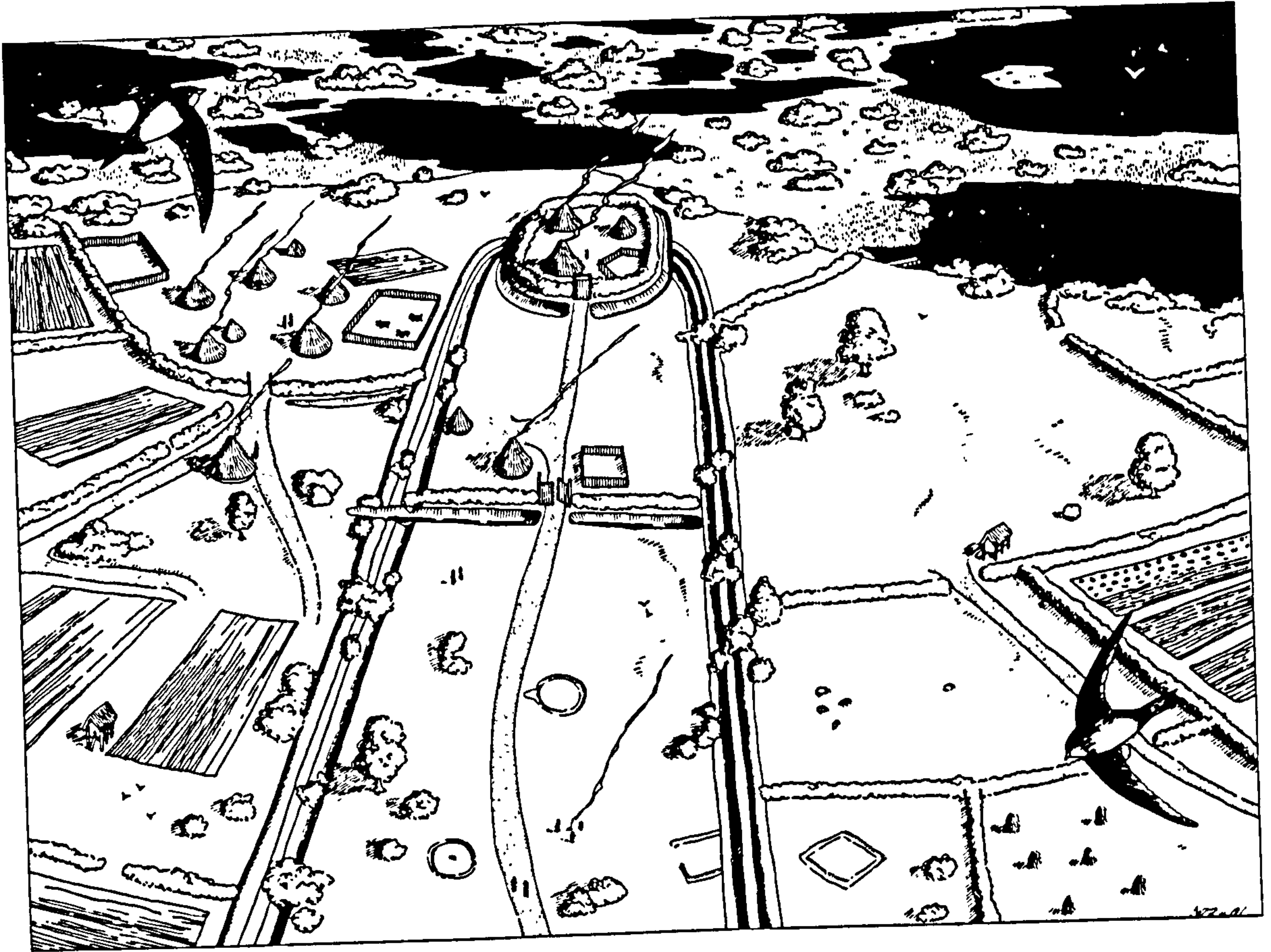


Figure 7.1 Reconstruction drawing of the western terminal of Old Montrose in the Iron Age. Note the flooding on the valley floor behind. The monument here still imposes upon the landscape and is still inhabited (from Armit 1997, 62).



## Interpretations

There are at least four sites which lie so close to rivers, on the flood plain, that they must have at least occasionally at risk of flooding or being waterlogged. Both Inchbare sites are located on the low, flat flood plain of the River West Water, a tributary of the nearby River North Esk. The eastern terminal of Inchbare 2 lies within 50m of the West Water, and at the furthest extent, is still only 150m from the river. Inchbare 1 lies within 600m of the river. Both run roughly west - east, mirroring the flow of the river. (Inchbare 2 overlooks a natural hollow which leads down to the river, called 'Witches Kirn'). A stream runs into the west water within 200m of the west terminal of Inchbare 2. It flows south to north, and again passes close to both *cursus* sites. The Cruick Water flows 600m from the south-east of Inchbare 1. The meeting point of the River North Esk and West Water is 1400m from the *cursus* area. Perhaps ironically Inchbare 1 was partially destroyed in the late 1970's by the laying of a water pipe.

Milton of Rattray sits on the flood plain of the River Erich, less than 200m to the north of the river. It sits on very flat land. Both *cursus* and river orientate roughly east - west. A 'stream' passes within a few tens of metres to the north, sharing this orientation, although this may relate to a nearby mill rather than being a natural waterway. The series of rectilinear pit enclosures at Milton of Guthrie lie on the flat flood plain of the Lunan Water, terminating within 50m of the current course of the river. (The confluence of the Lunan Water and Vinny Water lies 200m to the south of the enclosure).

The Newbarns *cursus* sits on the coastline, aligned on and overlooking the Lunan Bay - this is of particular interest because this is one of only two short stretches along the eastern Angus coastline area defined by a sandy beach rather than cliffs and rocks. (The other is at Montrose, aligned on by Old Montrose *cursus*). It runs straight up to, and terminates just short of, a cliff overlooking the sea.

Lochbrow, which lies on the edge of a gravel terrace, overlooks the River Annan flood plain. The current location of the Annan is within 50m of the northern



'terminal' of the *cursus*. The view today is obscured by a plantation of trees between the *cursus* and the river. The difference in height between *cursus* and river is not substantial. The general flow of the river is north-south, the same alignment as the *cursus*. A stream runs north-south into the Annan and to the west of Lochbrow ( about 500m to the east ). Again, the *cursus* has water on three sides - east, west and south.

There are also some notable English and Welsh examples. The remarkable setting of four *cursus* monuments around the modern Rudston village is in a topographic location unusual in East Yorkshire as a whole (Harding 1999). The *cursus* sites appear to be intrinsically linked with both the valley they sit in and its river, the Gypsy Race (fig. 7.2). Dymond (1966) describes the route of Rudston A *cursus* - the *cursus* terminal to the south sits on a ridge overlooking the valley, and runs northward across it. On the downslope, the *cursus* 'swings' around the head of a small slack. It then crosses the valley floor and climbs back up the opposite valley side. Along this route, it crosses (or is crossed by) the Gypsy Race. Rudston C runs roughly at a right angle to A, but the location is similar, crossing the valley floor and river, both ends overlooking the valley floor. The route of *cursus* B suggest a similar situation and D runs along the valley, intersecting with the modern route of the Race (T. Manby pers. comm.).

Maxey *cursus*, near Peterborough, lies on the first gravel terrace of the River Welland, amidst a bewildering array of other cropmarks. These sites are located within an area known originally as Macuseige, or *Maccus's Island*. This small area of gravel terrace is completely bounded by water, the River Welland to the north and the Maxey Cut to the south. (This is a modern drainage channel, exploiting an old route of a meandering water channel across the valley floor). Although this 'island' will have changed slightly in size and shape over time the situation has not (cropmarks show a series of water channels active in the Neolithic just to the south of the *cursus* (Palmer & Cox 1999)). The *cursus* runs diagonally across the centre of the 'island', with the north-west terminal within



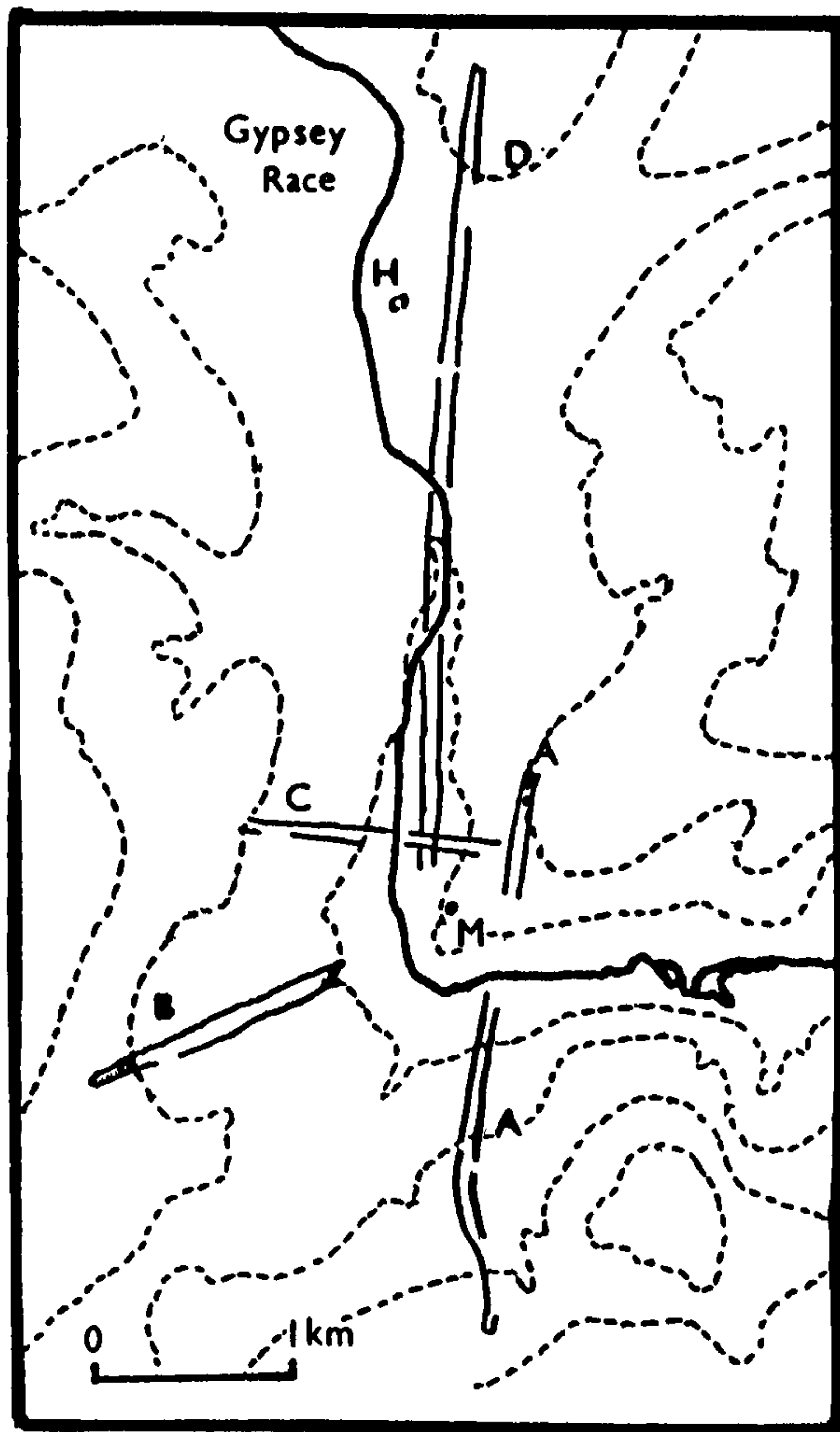


Figure 7.2 Rudston cursus complex, Yorkshire. The four cursus monuments (A to D) all intersect the Gypsy Race at some point. H is a henge and M is the Rudston Monolith (after Parker Pearson 1993, fig.54)



200m of the Welland, and at times must have been completely surrounded by water (Pryor & French 1985).

Sarn-y-Bryn-Caled 1 cursus, and nearby timber circle, sit on a gravel peninsula in the valley of the River Severn, which currently runs 1km to the east (although the contemporary route is unknown ). Between the cursus and the current course of the Severn are a series of old river channels. They were “probably still active c.2000 years ago” (Gibson 1994, 146). The cursus itself also runs parallel to the Severn Valley and the current route of the Severn. Dorchester-on-Thames cursus, Oxon., aligns on the Thame and lies on the gravels of the River Thames nearby. North Stoke enclosure overlooks the Thames (which it runs parallel to). Springfield cursus, Essex, terminates just 150m north of the River Chelmer, which it also overlooks - a point which Hedges and Buckley (1981) stress. Fornham-all-Saints cursus, Surrey, runs parallel to the River Lark which is less than 300m away. The cursus is irregular in shape and almost parallels the meanders of the river.

Further north in the Midlands, Aston-upon-Trent cursus lies within 1km of the Trent, and 3km from the major confluence of the Trent and Derwent. Barford cursus, near Aston-upon-Trent, overlooks the flood plain of the nearby Trent, and runs parallel to a stream 150m away. In Yorkshire, Thornborough cursus sits on the river gravels quarter of a mile from the River Ure. It runs at right-angles to the valleys of the Rivers Ure and Swale just as the henges share an alignment with this valley (N Thomas 1955; Richards 1996). The Scorton site sits 500m north-east of a meander of the River Swale, and so it goes on.

Tilley (1994) recounts that during his experiences along the Dorset cursus he had to pass in and out of three valleys which would have been at least seasonally waterlogged in the Neolithic. The Terrig is the most westerly of the three, lying near the western terminal of the Gussage section of the cursus. The stream here is only dry during the height of the summer. To the east, near the eastern Gussage terminal, is a second valley which is the source area of the River Allen. The



valley bottom would, "in the Neolithic, have been wet and marshy for much of the year" (*ibid.* 184). The third valley, near the western end of the Pentridge section, contains a modern drainage channel but, "at the time of construction and use of the cursus the valley bottom would have been boggy land, and water-filled for much of the year" (*ibid.* 181).

There are still further cursus / river intersections. Stanwell cursus, at Heathrow Airport, crosses two rivers (O'Connell 1987) and a stream runs across Potlock cursus, Derbyshire, passing through a pair of causeways (Guilbert 1996).

There is some evidence to suggest that at least at some sites cursus ditches were sometimes waterlogged (as Richards (1996) has suggested of henge ditches). Such evidence is difficult to get but we can glean some information from the experiences of excavators. Stretches of excavated ditch became waterlogged at Aston-upon-Trent (Gibson & Loveday 1989), Sutton/Drayton Courtenay (Ainslie & Wallis 1987) and North Stoke (Case 1982). Many sites, by the very nature of their low lying locations on flood plains, would have had waterlogged ditches at some time. This would have been through flooding and the retreat of flood waters or the movement of local water tables (such as Thornborough or the Milfield avenue (Richards 1996)).

### **7.4. *Cursus* and colour**

I first began to think about monuments and colour when reading imaginative accounts by archaeologists of how two different English cursus sites (one on chalkland, the other gravel) would have looked when initially constructed, or after being cleaned. Castleden suggested that Stonehenge Greater cursus would look like, "a double earthwork slicing across the territory in two white slashes of chalk" (1993, 45). We can suppose this effect was shared by most chalkland earthworks (you cut the land, it bleeds white...). Pryor wrote of Maxey cursus that the "ditch must have looked striking when open. The gravel at Maxey is white, and when dry, reflects sunlight; it would have stood out as a strong white slash across the countryside" (in Pryor & French 1985, 301).



Of course this phenomena would have declined with time, as erosion and weather filled the ditches with silt, and would have been dependent on lighting conditions (a theme I will return to). Artistic reconstructions of the Cleaven Dyke show an equally striking yellow-brown triple earthwork cutting across the normal, dull local vegetation (front cover, Barclay & Maxwell 1998).

Of course freshly cut monuments, or erected timbers, would have inevitably provided a contrast with the pre-cursus world not just visually, but for the other senses (the smell and touch of cut timber and freshly tilled earth). Colours would inevitably change and shadows are created where they were none before (“...even grey stone, when fresh and unweathered, can stand out to challenge the passer-by” (Lynch 1998, 62)).

A further dimension can be added to this if we consider waterlogged ditches or monuments. When the sun shines on a river, or any other body of water, the water appears to be white and sparkles. Water can also take on a white sheen under a cloudy sky or the moon. So as chalk gets overgrown and dirty and gravel grows weeds and silts up, the occasional (seasonal) infilling of cursus ditches would produce over a longer period of time (and with less human involvement) ‘white slashes’ of water.

The colours of the monuments that I have experienced are those of the crop in the field or the grassy mound. The cropmarks are bright green slashes in a yellow field. When excavated they are a collection of browns, yellows and oranges. These are the only colours I can really see in this modern landscape.

These effects which I have briefly suggested are merely side effects of the construction of a monument, and we could leave these observations here, acknowledging them as aesthetically pleasing (special) effects at best. However, if we are to continue along the line of argument that cursus monuments were





Plate 7.2 The River North Esk in the summer sun.



meaningful statements, and visually important, perhaps we should think about what these lighting effects could mean.

#### **7.4. Mimicry, incorporation and prominence. Exploiting topography.**

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the developing ideas about the role of natural features in cultural monuments, and vice versa. Two aspects of the relationships between these things - the mimicry of topographical features, and the incorporation of natural places into the monuments themselves - are the themes I want to take up in more detail, here in relation to cursus monuments and bank barrows.

The Lamb Knowe end of the Eskdalemuir bank barrow, when approached from the side, looks rather like a insignificant low mound running up a hillside. After spending a some time in the vicinity of the terminal, it is clear that a series of very similar natural spurs or mounds run uphill at around the same contour level as the terminal. The modern uniform pasture and gorse vegetation augments the similarities, but it does seem that morphologically the bank does not look out of place here. Indeed, it fits in perfectly, and this probably explains why archaeologists took so long to identify it (RCAHMS 1992, 1997). It mimics the topography and, to the un-knowledgeable eye it barely appears artificial. In fact, it has become part of the topography.

The Tom's Knowe terminal (plate 7.3) employs a level of mimicry as well. It was initially interpreted as a burial cairn built on top of a natural knoll. In fact where the topography stopped and the monument started was the subject of much ambiguity as recorded by the sequence of interpretation recorded in the NMRS, recorded by Ordnance Survey fieldworkers and Yates (1984). The impressive natural location of this mound sees it sit adjacent to a flat platform, a perfect stage for ritual activity to take place, a kind of natural forecourt beside a tomb-like earthwork.





*Plate 7.3 Tom's Knowe terminal.*

An even more intimate relationship between cursus and landscape can be found at the south-west terminal of the Cleaven Dyke. A narrative of this experience has already been given in chapter 6, but it is worth recounting this particular part of the walk here. As I walked along the cropmark section, the land beside the southern ditch location began to rise up in a long natural spur, until my view to the south was almost completely obscured. (The bank would have blocked my view north). The control of my vision and movement which this suggested meant that it became difficult to tell what was natural and what was artificial (both were controlling my vision and movement). Then I reached the rather indistinct terminal area, with an unhindered view of the wider landscape and back along the monument.

Barclay & Maxwell (1993) excavated parts of this terminal area. Cropmarks were unclear and there seemed to be no distinct end to the earthworks. The central bank runs out some way short of the ditch ends for instance. The excavation gives the feeling of a patchy monument, petering out, with the southern ditch continuing for some 60m further than the northern. The ditches diminish in scale in this area, partly a product of differential plough erosion, but the level of survival may indicate again a focus on the south half of the enclosure.



It seems that the cursus and the low hill it runs towards and ends on merge together. They overlap seamlessly as the earthwork dies out and is replaced by the low hill and its spur. The final south-east stretch of the Cleaven Dyke is part of the hillside and the hillside is the cursus terminal. Where one begins and the other ends is impossible to tell and seems insignificant. The focus of the Dyke may not always have been this hill but it was where the building finally stopped, and this seems somehow appropriate and inevitable. The hill was already highlighted, aligned on by the nearby Herald Hill long barrow (Barclay & Maxwell 1997, 1998).

The inclusion of large hollows in the terminal area of Broich cursus is another of these ambiguous relationships, where the local intricacies of topography (barely recorded on even 1:10000 map sheets) seem to have been exploited by the cursus builders. The hollows were appropriated into the fabric of the monument or the architecturally defined space, and so became part of the experience. The hollow in the terminal area is a different world, with views all around except towards the river obscured, a microcosm of an enclosure which is as wide as a football-pitch and many times longer, defined by banks and ditches which it sits within. It controls movement and channels it into the terminal area. There is every possibility that features such as this were part of the cursus and it may never have been clear whether they were architectural additions, or just always there (and this may not have mattered anyway).

The locations of terminals on prominent positions, often overlooking rivers or streams, has been noted earlier in this chapter and in chapter 6. Sites like Holywood 1, Holywood 2, Gallaberry, Lochbrow, Broich, Drybridge, Newbarns, Tom's Knowe, the Cleaven Dyke, and others had at least one end in a dominant location, exploiting the landscape to heighten the experience and give meaning to the monument (Brophy 1995, forthcoming b). Old Montrose runs astride a land island so is totally defined by a stunningly powerful and important location. Standing within the line of Holm the view over the Nith valley is expansive and



dominant. Dunadd sits in the centre of a narrow pass in the Kilmartin valley, parallel to the valley and is the focus of the landscape here.

### 7.5. Alignment and mis-alignment

The alignment of the Cleaven Dyke has perhaps been analysed more than any other *cursus* site in Scotland and, in the end, it is generally concluded by both Barclay and Maxwell (1998) and Ruggles (in the same volume) that the monument pointed towards no significant horizon points. The Hill of Lethendy (un-named on the 1:50000 and 1:10000 map sheets) is perhaps the best contender, although only on the very near horizon. This low hill to the north-west is unspectacular and rather spread out but, when walking north-west towards the terminal, it is certainly on the alignment of the central bank, even with the deviation towards the south near the end. However, every time I have made this walk, I am struck by the under-whelming nature of this experience.

To the south-east, beyond the topographical terminal area, the *cursus* aligns on Northballo Hill some miles away. Although higher and better defined than the Hill of Lethendy it is still a seemingly insignificant peak in a low range of hills. Neither of these alignments seems to have any more astronomical attraction than they do visually. It is concluded that “neither alignment seems likely to be significant” (Barclay & Maxwell 1998, 49).

However, there is a significant non-alignment (or mis-alignment) recognised by Ruggles (again in Barclay & Maxwell 1998). The hill of Benachally, 406m high, and some 10km distant to the north-west is a far more striking feature of the horizon, visible over the shoulder of the Hill of Lethendy. It lies less than 10° from the *cursus* alignment, and Ruggles also notes that there would have been an astronomical event attached to it in the Neolithic, namely that (viewed from the Dyke) for a six week period on either side of the solstice the sun would set over the right side of the hill. Ruggles argues that a 10° shift would have not deviated the *cursus* from its level route, and so concludes that this was not aligned on because it did not matter (at least in terms of the *cursus*) (*ibid.* 52).



Criffel, south of Dumfries, is locally the highest hill and cursus sites in the general area all seem to fail to align on by only a short distance. Cavens, for instance, lies on the lower slopes of the hill and is aligned due north (Truckell 1984). Therefore it 'misses' the broad top of the hill (which so dominates the local landscape) by about 10°. It seems all the more strange that it doesn't head straight for the hill-top when there are no topographical constraints - it already cuts across the contours of the slope at a peculiar angle. (Redhill lies on the lower slopes of the hill next to Criffel but aligns on a stream not the hill-top). Hollywood 1 also closely misses Criffel, although in this case is already over ten miles distant. Walking south along the cursus Criffel is visible breaking the horizon immediately to the right of the western cursus ditch (plate 6.23). (For parts of the walk, it would have been obscured by the bank). From Hollywood 2, it is now impossible to see Criffel because of woodland and a rail embankment. However, it is possible to speculate that it would have been visible if not lost behind the banks but again a close mis-alignment would still be expected.

Indeed, in all my walks along *cursus* monuments, there have been no horizon alignments which have seemed obviously important and indeed few I can remember at all. The few exceptions include the Knock of Crieff, sitting over Broich cursus (and to a lesser extent Bennybeg) to the north. From my fieldwork at Broich, however, I have suggested that this site was to be best experienced walking southwards away from the hill. Bennybeg points southwards to the nearby spectacular Bennybeg crags, a huge outcrop of igneous dyke, which is visible as a cliff facing away from the *cursus*.

The sites do align on some things, however, ranging from other places of human activity (see the following chapter) to rivers and streams (see earlier in this chapter). Perhaps we could speculate that the *cursus* monuments in Scotland were more concerned with aligning on these local things rather than far wider flung reference points (even the Hill of Lethendy is only a few miles from the Cleaven Dyke). This ties in with sites being constructed to deal with local



## Interpretations

concerns, being built to local specifications in ways which *meant* something to those people and those who would follow.

Mis-alignments could also mean that far away places were not what these sites were all about. Perhaps this suggests that these monuments were making the point that these far away places didn't matter. It could have been of course that the astronomical significance of Banachally was never noticed, or that there was some significance in the boring Hill of Lethendy, or even that the cursus was aligned in the wrong direction and never rectified. Perhaps we are missing the point of the horizon altogether here or the sites pointed to things which we can never see as significant (or perhaps can never see).

### 7.6. Summing up

It is hardly a new observation to suggest that topography had an important relationship with monuments, nor that the landscape was shaped and appropriated by these communities. This has been a collection of my observations, made over the last five years, some of which are blindingly obvious, some of them mere coincidence, some inevitable consequences of *cursus* locations, and some most definitely meaningful. This is telling us something about these places, even if it is only telling us that something more than practical concerns were at work. The interpretations which have stemmed from fieldwork, and thinking about these monuments, are not intended to apply to all sites, nor are they necessarily constant throughout the biography of an individual site - for instance waterlogged ditches are more applicable to ditch-defined sites.

This chapter has also not been intended to re-iterate the nature - culture divide which I set out to critique as part of the general mind-set of archaeologists to define and divide. Rather, I have tried to illustrate that there is a blurring of the edges within and around these monuments, that whether through incorporating, mimicking, waterlogging, aligning, or reflecting there is a drawing together of the natural and cultural in a way that the two become one, indistinguishable.



This chapter has also dealt with transformation, the idea of things forever changing, whether through human intervention (see next chapter) or the erosion of flooding or sunlight. Again, the dual nature of change (reflecting both changes in human life, and the seasons, and the water cycle, and so on) reflects the intertwining of humans and the world, their fate in some part in the hands of the other.

Finally, the idea of paradox, of the mystery of nature (the powers of water) and the mystery of these places we call cursus. The transforming world is strange and the changing cursus is as well. I will go on to suggest in a later chapter that monuments were an attempt to deal with the paradoxes of life, to focus and hand over their concerns in these special places.

These ideas - transformation, ambiguity and paradox - are very human concerns, played out at cursus monuments through the symbolic confusing of things plucked from the natural world with the construction over a period of time of enclosures. These ideas will run through the next chapter (on the architectural themes attached to these sites) and, from there, we can start to think about some possible interpretations of these monuments, or at least some of them. For now we can begin to suggest that the ambiguous nature of the monuments are reflections in some way of the lives of the people who built and used them. After all, they are still ambiguous to us today.



## 8. Architectural themes

### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will look at architectural techniques which are commonly found across Scotland's cursus sites. These themes deal not only with the initial construction of the *cursus* but also with their continuing usage and embellishments. It also looks at the relationships with other contemporary and earlier sites. I hope to demonstrate the close relationship between some of the observations made in the previous chapter. The architectural formalisation of a space and the reiteration of this through maintenance and alterations across time are merely continuing a process of remembering the special nature of a place which may have been respected and acknowledged long before the first ditch was dug or post-hole was cut.

Just as the previous chapter was divided into a series of differing relationships, but which nevertheless overlapped quite dramatically, so here a series of observations that may superficially seem quite different will actually prove to be intertwining and connected. This rather detailed analysis, of what superficially appear to be a standard rectilinear enclosures, reflects the continual analysis and re-working of the equally standardised Cleaven Dyke. On early plans and maps the earthwork was depicted as ruler straight but, upon subsequent close analysis, it was shown to be a place of variation, irregularity and repetition (Barclay & Maxwell 1998). When we examine features (part of a ditch, a pit) neither as detached individual units nor as lost in the whole we can begin to see things which may have worked on the human level, the level of agency and of individual acts within the greater whole - the general plan with the co-operating teams of participants.

From this discussion, I want to draw out the ideas of parallel things, of the relative porosity of boundaries, of segmented construction, of junctions and corners, and of special places marked more than once by actions (digging,



erecting, burning, filling, even of preparing the timber) and even of (recti)linearity.

Once again, this chapter is not meant to be a re-enforcement of the category *cursus*. I am not looking for universal building techniques or ways of doing things. Similar ideas may have created similar effects but here I am trying to think about the way the monuments came into being and how they grew and eventually stopped growing. This is about what I see as the idiosyncrasies of these sites - how they are all different and yet can still tell us (hopefully) about life in the Neolithic. There is constant overlap and blurring in the arbitrary themes I have partially drawn apart, just as in the previous chapter. Where one begins another has not yet ended. I will repeat myself, as I cannot decide what some of these observations really mean. The monuments, and my experiences of them, are organic.

My observations are drawn from a variety of sources; from the excavation reports and from being on some of the excavations, from plans and contour surveys, and from a careful re-evaluation of the aerial photographic evidence for as many of the sites as possible (including RCAHMS computer rectifications and my own manual transcriptions). As with all cropmark sites, the disclaimer should be that cropmarks not only create a 2-d image of an often complex palimpsest but they also show the culmination of human activity in a place (we see too much on them). Yet aerial photographs do not always reveal all archaeological features as well illustrated by many excavations (for instance, Thomas' digs at Holywood 1 and 2 (1999) and Dunragit (with Leivers 1999). Air photo interpretation is a subjective medium.

### 8.2. (Recti)linearity

Perhaps the only thing which the wide variety of sites called *cursus* in Scotland share is their linearity. It is only their exceptional length and, to a lesser extent, length to width ratio which defined them as such. Not even rectilinearity really links the sites - there are quite a few examples which seem to have no enclosing terminal at all, leaving them as a pair of parallel ditches as opposed to a



rectangular enclosure which is traditionally regarded as the cursus shape. The linearity of cursus sites has also traditionally been used to explain the function of these enclosures as housing linear movement, suggesting how important the external shape has been. This is a simple observation but important because it is the root of the classification of these sites. They are defined by their extreme length.

### 8.3. Segmented construction and building events

One aspect of the construction of these sites, which is reflected both through excavations and close analysis of aerial photographs, is the segmented nature of their construction. This is an equally valid comment for sites regardless of the boundary type and manifests itself in several ways, ranging from the dramatic uneven profile of the Cleaven Dyke to the post-holes and pits at Bannockburn. Here I will look at the segmented nature of the boundaries, before moving on to look at the segmented nature of the monuments themselves.

The Cleaven Dyke is perhaps the most explicit example of this building technique, being constructed from a series of long mounds and associated flanking ditches over an unknown period of time, an almost organic growth probably in a south-east direction. Although when the Dyke is visited its irregularity is striking, both along its length and in the height of bank and depth of ditches, this was not acknowledged by earlier writers. It is clearly not as perfectly straight as suggested by earlier authors (Abercromby *et al* 1902, Richmond 1940), but this irregularity remained unexplained until the detailed work of Barclay and Maxwell (1998) along the Dyke from 1993 to 1996 (already discussed in chapter 3). This work included a highly accurate contour survey along the complete length of the upstanding monument (fig. 8.1).

The initial observation, that the “central bank....appears to consist of linked dumps and the ditches appear to be made up of linked segments” (Barclay & Maxwell 1993, 2), and that there were a series of barely acknowledged breaks along the length of the earthwork, was followed up by more detailed



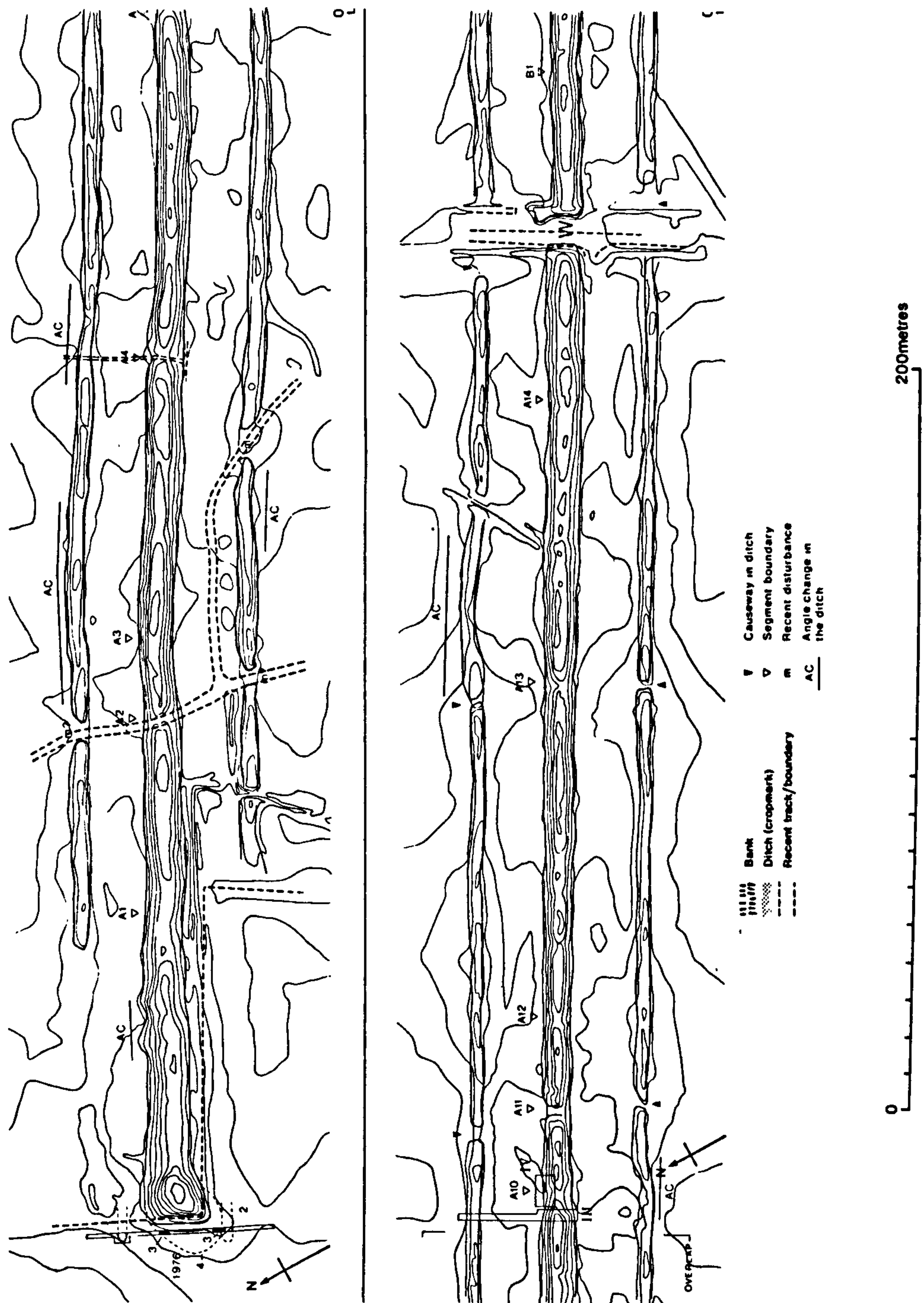


Figure 8.1 Extract from the contour survey of the Cleaven Dyke showing the segmented nature of construction (from Barclay & Maxwell 1998).



investigation. As mentioned earlier, investigation of a meeting point of two segments in 1995, for instance, through an axial trench demonstrated that the south-easterly of the two segments of bank sat up against the other segment. This also suggesting it had been built later. Spending a lot of time around the monument, wandering in and out of the ditches in the dull woodland it suddenly became noticeable that ditches stopped abruptly and then began again slightly off-set, or a few metres away. The illusion of a simple uniform set of earthworks was shattered.

The detailed contour survey undertaken by Burgess (in Barclay & Maxwell 1998) came at the same time as the realisation that an illustration in an earlier excavation report (Adamson & Gallagher 1986) was inaccurate. These things combined finally led to a much clearer understanding of the architecture and construction of the Dyke, if not the meaning. For some reason, between the interim report and the final publication of Adamson's limited excavation in 1975 of a narrow trench beyond the visible north-west 'terminal', the trench location moved 8.5m and was widened, both for the final published illustration, and so in the discussion of the excavation. The effect was to make it seem that the Dyke continued in a straight line at this point, when in fact it kinks dramatically to the south and terminates just beyond the trench (Barclay & Maxwell 1998).

Barclay and Maxwell (1998, 1999) have reconstructed the constructive units (and possibly phases) of the Cleaven Dyke. Initially, an oval burial mound was erected (now the north-west terminal of the monument). A long barrow-like structure was added, possibly in two parts and about 80m long, running south-east from the oval mound. This had closely flanking ditches. The monument then takes the form which it follows the rest of its length, with a central mound and parallel ditches set some distance from this. Meanwhile the alignment of the monument gradually edged southwards for 300m before becoming more consistent. There are then five sections of the Dyke (labelled A to E) with four clear breaks between them.



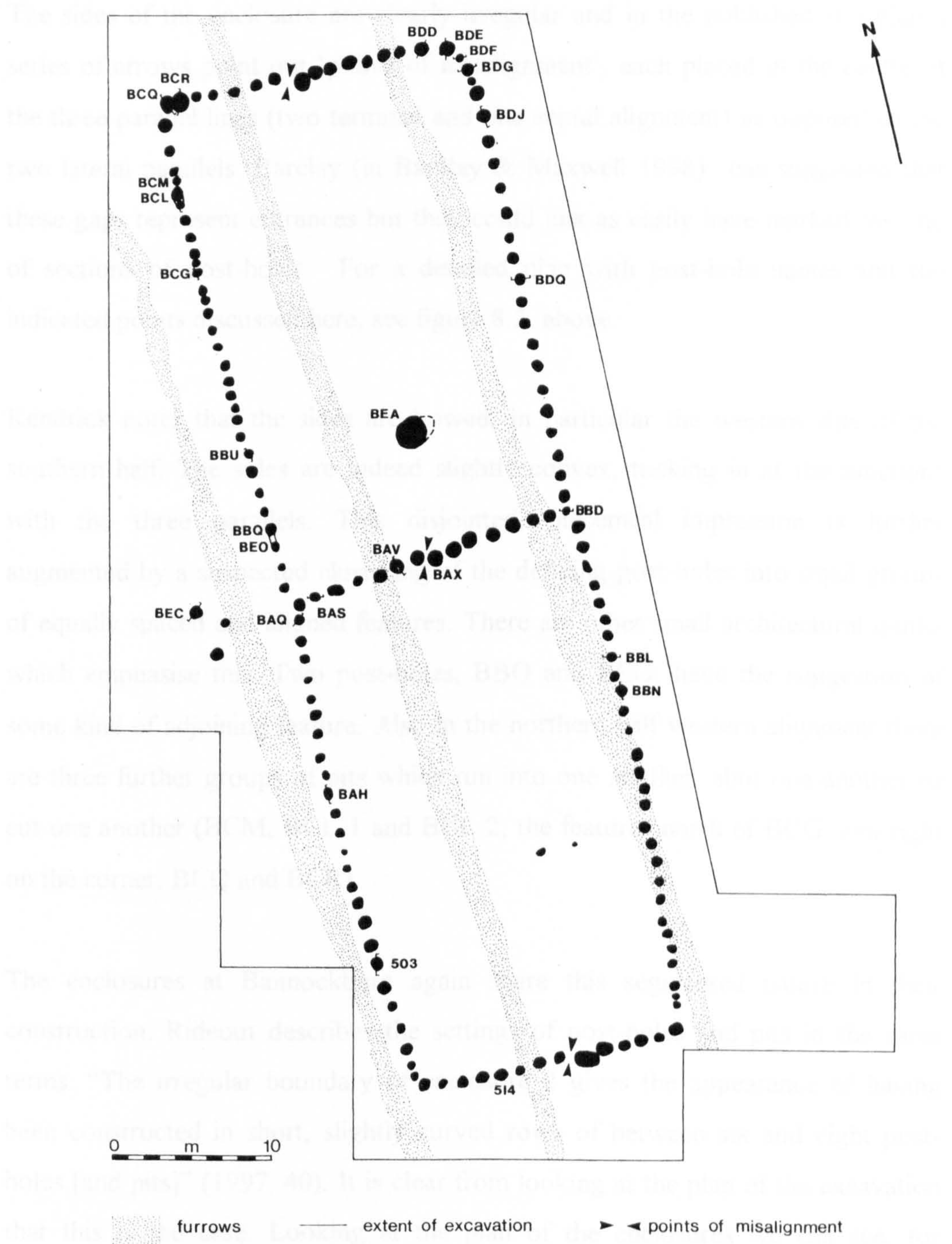
Each segment consists of much shorter segments, which adjoin one another whilst being distinct in profile, of between 25m and 100m long. The contour survey has brought out all of the intricacies of the architecture of the site. There are continual sharp changes of alignment, sometimes first in the ditch which are then echoed in the bank. Section terminals are often larger or wider than segment ends. The bank appears to wobble in places and it becomes more irregular towards the south-east end, removed further and further from the original terminal in both space and time. The general effect of this irregularity is captured well on the contour survey plan (in Barclay & Maxwell 1998), and can be experienced by walking along the monument itself (see chapter 6, or Brophy & MacGregor forthcoming). The detail is captured only by intimate, repeated contact.

Barclay and Maxwell have identified twenty-eight distinct segments, and possibly a further six in the cropmark section. Each is an individual building event and we cannot be sure how far they are separated in time. What is clear is that the site was built by the continual addition of more and more of the same, extending towards a low hill on which it eventually terminates as a natural opposite to the north-west terminal mound. If these had been built annually it could have been done in a lifetime. Constructional events may have been precipitated by irregular or infrequent events or occurrences. The massive nature of some segment ends suggest that these may have once terminated much shorter monuments (Barclay & Maxwell 1998, 110-1).

Although the Cleaven Dyke is an earthwork monument, still quite clearly visible today, it is not the only site to display such localised discontinuity (and yet overall continuity) in construction. The excavation of three pit- and post-defined monuments have suggested that these sites were not as regular as perhaps the overall plan would suggest. Each of these three sites - Douglamuir, Bannockburn and Upper Largie - were introduced in chapter 3.



Kendrick's excavation of Douglassmuir commented that the "distribution of the pits is not regular and the excavations are not strictly regular" (1995, 40). The plan of the excavated features is shown in Figure 8.2.



includes a grouping of pit numbers P26 to P31, or P17 to P25. The group numbered P37 to perhaps P42 covers the area around P34 to P40.

Figure 8.2 Plan of excavated features at Douglassmuir. Some of the named features are referred to in the main text (from Kendrick 1995, illus.2).



Kendrick, excavator of Douglamuir, commented that the “distribution of the post-holes was not regular and the enclosure was not strictly rectangular” (1995, 32). The sides of the enclosure are clearly irregular and in the published site plan a series of arrows point out ‘points of misalignment’, each placed in the centre of the three parallel lines (two terminal and one septal alignment) as opposed to the two lateral parallels. Barclay (in Barclay & Maxwell 1998) has suggested that these gaps represent entrances but they could just as easily have marked the end of sections of post-holes. For a detailed plan with post-hole names and the indicated points discussed here, see figure 8.2, above.

Kendrick notes that the sides are bowed, in particular the western side of the southern half. The sides are indeed slightly convex, tucking in at the junctions with the three parallels. This disjointed, piecemeal impression is further augmented by a suspected clustering of the defining post-holes into small groups of equally spaced and aligned features. There are other small architectural quirks which emphasise this. Two post-holes, BBQ and BEO, have the suggestion of some kind of adjoining feature. Also in the northern half western alignment there are three further groups of pits which run into one another, abut one another or cut one another (BCM, BCL 1 and BCL 2; the features north of BCG; and right on the corner, BCQ and BCR).

The enclosures at Bannockburn again share this segmented nature in their construction. Rideout describes the settings of post-holes and pits in the same terms. “The irregular boundary of enclosure 2 gives the appearance of having been constructed in short, slightly curved rows of between six and eight post-holes [and pits]” (1997, 40). It is clear from looking at the plan of the excavation that this is the case. Looking at the plan of the enclosures we can see, for instance, a grouping of pit numbers P26 to P31, or P17 to P25. The group numbered P37 to perhaps P42 curves slightly inwards. Post-holes PH39 to PH44, and PH24 to PH30 again form segments, or groups of pits. These features are shown in figure 8.3.



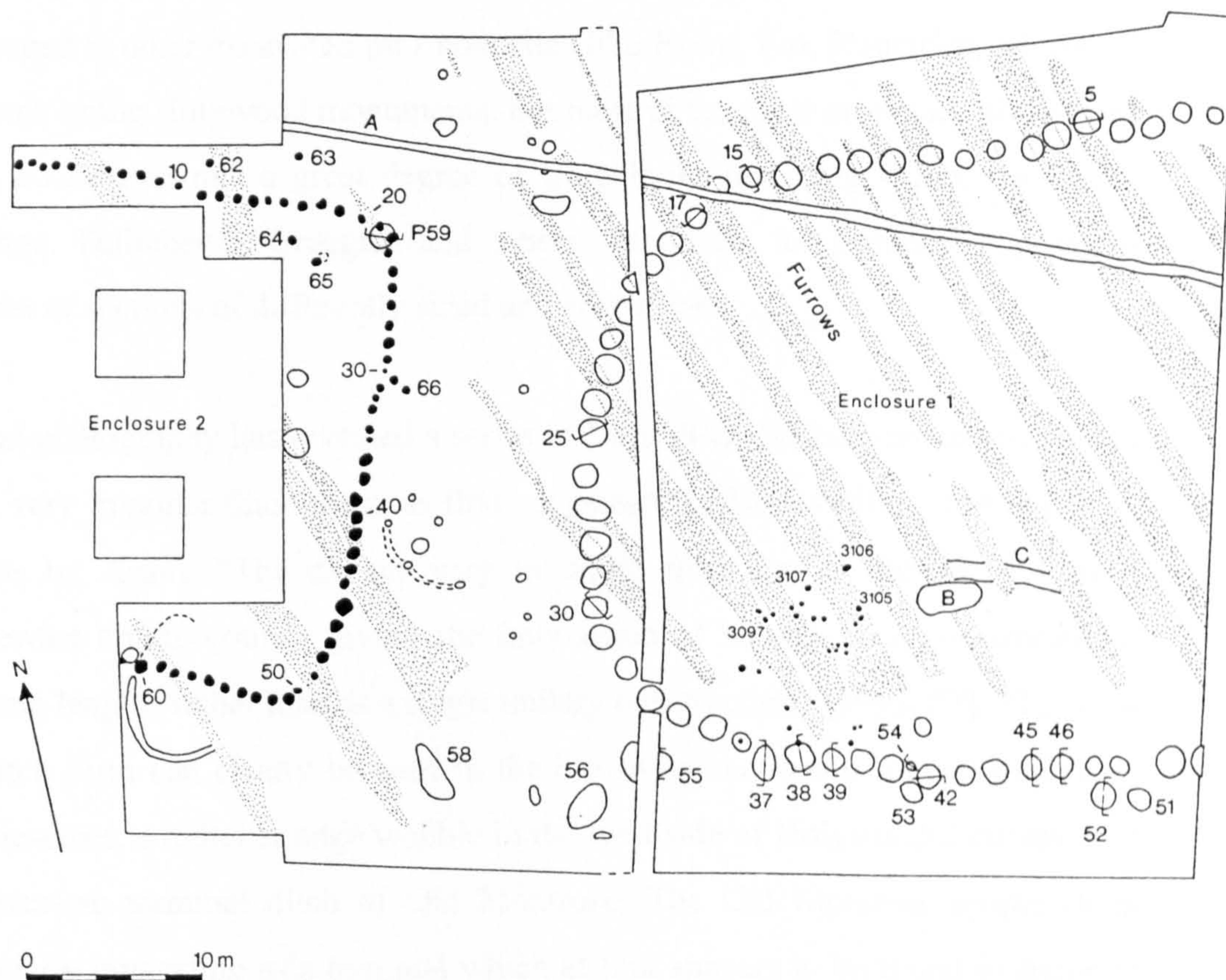


Figure 8.3 Excavated features at Bannockburn with feature numbers (from Rideout 1997).



In plan, the as yet unexcavated post-holes at Upper Largie also demonstrate this phenomenon (John Terry pers. comm.). On the plan shown in 3.11, I have numbered the post-holes which seem to define the *cursus* and groupings (such as 13 to 17, 18 to 22, and less obviously, 23 to 26, and other lateral groupings) can be recognised as possible ‘segments’. Such arrangements are not as easily discerned at other excavated pit / post sites like Holm, Fox Plantation, Milton of Rattray, or the Holywood monuments, but most of the other cropmark pit-defined sites do demonstrate a great degree of irregularity including Holm, Balneaves Cottage, Tullichettle, Craggish and others. Woodhill, for instance, appears to consist of sections of differently sized and spaced pits.

Aerial photography has revealed a series of large ditch-defined *cursus* enclosures with very irregular ditch lines, as first suggested for Drylawhill / Preston Mains *cursus* by Armit. “The ditches vary in width from 2m to 3m and follow a somewhat erratic course, giving the impression of having been constructed in discrete lengths rather than as a single unitary construction” (1993, 57). This kind of ditch form can clearly be seen in the blown-up sections of lateral ditches at Curriestanes, a rather strange wobble in the west side of Holywood 2 *cursus*, and the western terminal ditch of Old Montrose. The Old Montrose cropmark is especially interesting as a terminal which at first appears to be round in shape is actually constructed of a series of short straight segments of ditch. A closer look at sites such as Holywood 1, Broich or Drybridge shows that they have incredibly wobbly side (see also plate 8.1).

### **8.4. Internal divisions.**

Internal divisions are few and far between in *cursus* sites outwith Scotland, but north of the border, many sites, including the vast majority of pit-defined sites, have them. They tend to beg the question of whether they genuinely divided the large enclosure into two or more parts or whether they were the terminals of smaller earlier (or later) enclosures. “....Scottish *cursus* monuments display these transverse features, and it is not clear whether they are subdivisions of the of the interior or indicate the extension of an existing monument” (RCAHMS 1994,



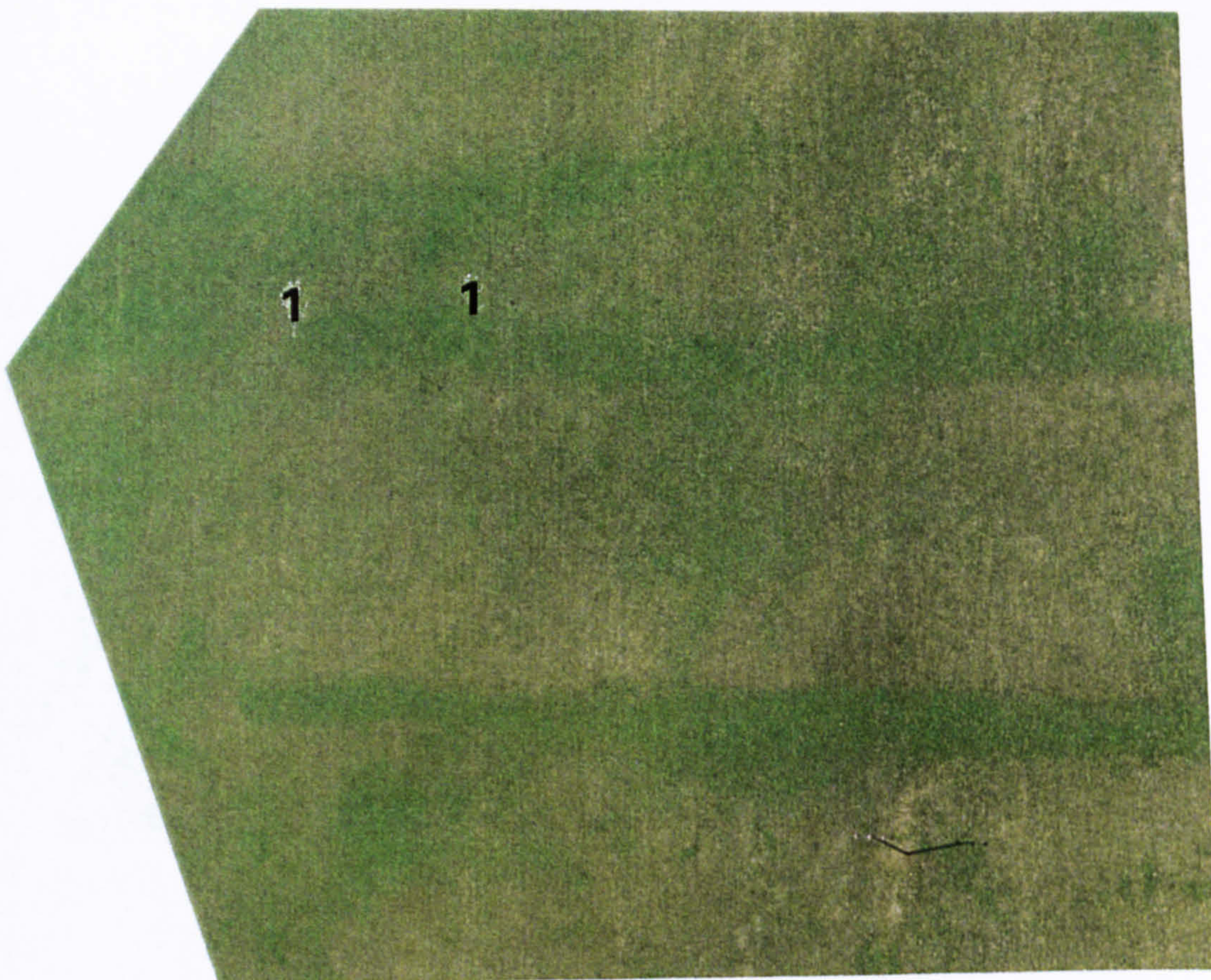


Plate 8.1 Ditch segments through cropmarks. Top, a short stretch of Hollywood 2 to the north of the causeways. The western ditch (top of the photograph) has a distinct oval segment which seems to slightly mis-align with the ditch to its north (1). Bottom, the eastern end of Drylawhill. The ditches here have a very irregular appearance. Both cropped photographs © RCAHMS.



26). In either case, we have a kind of segmented monument either built in parts or divided into those parts. These segments seem to take the form of smaller enclosures. Two large English sites seem to have been constructed in parts and both left different traces in the archaeological record. The internal division in the Dorset cursus was the terminal of a smaller original enclosure (Barrett *et al* 1991) but, although Maxey was built in three segments (Pryor & French 1985), there are no internal divisions.

Blairhall cursus is one of a small group of ditch-defined sites with internal divisions, in this case two, one of which may be double ditched. What is interesting about these septal ditches is that they seem to define discontinuities in the cursus itself, possibly representing different phases of construction. The cursus enclosure significantly widens to the east of the central division, and has a slightly different alignment (RCAHMS 1994). Old Montrose has a distinctive septal division towards its western end with a causeway in the centre which presumably allowed (controlled) access into that terminal area. The Cleaven Dyke has breaks, not divisions, but with much the same effect.

The vast majority of sites with such divisions are pit-defined, however. The three sites around the village of Friockheim - Balneaves Cottage, Milton of Guthrie and Douglasmuir - each have at least one internal pit line. Balneaves Cottage has a septal pit line about 110m from the north terminal and, as with many of these sites, the lateral pit lines seem to curve inwards slightly to meet it. The terminal area, a rectilinear enclosure (almost a parallelogram) measuring 110m by 25m, has the appearance of an enclosure which once stood alone and was then added to. Certainly, it appears (on air photos and the transcriptions) to be wider than the rest of the monument and ill-fitting. Milton of Guthrie, on the other side of Friockheim, has three visible internal divisions, and these initially led to it being mis-interpreted as two separate cursus monuments. Gordon Barclay's manual transcription (fig. 3.13) shows either a series of similarly sized pit-defined rectilinear enclosures abutting each other or being added to each other, or one very large enclosure with a series of internal divisions. The phasing possibilities



of such a site are endless (as demonstrated through various different interpretations of Douglamuir, even after it had been excavated...). Perhaps only one 'small' enclosure stood alone at any one time with the next along replacing it. Maybe two stood apart and were later joined? Perhaps it has a similarity to the Cleaven Dyke in some way with extensions in the same style to an existing monument. The temporal nature of standing timbers means that it would have worked over a short time period. The Douglasmuir enclosure has one internal division which neatly divides the enclosure in half. Even after excavation, however, it is impossible to say with any degree of certainty whether this was an addition, an original feature, a free-standing alignment (see parallels), or even an earlier terminal.

The phenomena of the sides almost being tucked in at joining points with septal pit or post-lines is quite obvious at sites like Kinalty and Woodhill. The Kinalty site has most irregular sides, which occasionally bow outwards, and the enclosure narrows noticeably towards its southern terminal. It has one internal division, and the lateral pit alignments literally curve inwards to meet it narrowing the enclosure here as well. Again, it is impossible to tell whether this is division or terminal. Woodhill, with slightly larger pits than those of the other Tayside sites (other than Milton of Rattray), has a most peculiar septal pit alignment that seems to be a continuation of the south-eastern part of the boundary, curving into one another. However, it meets the more regular northern alignment at a near right-angle. The western half of the *cursus* is narrower and has the impression of being tacked on to the end of the wider east end.

Other sites display this bowing of the sides without an obvious or visible internal division. The two recently discovered sites on either side of the Ruchill Water at Comrie, Tullichettle and Craggish House, both display similarly irregular sides. The relatively few aerial photographs that have ever been taken of these enclosure (less than a handful each) do not show any internal divisions but the sides noticeably bow outwards, not independent of but parallel to each other.



## Interpretations

Perhaps further aerial reconnaissance will identify septal pit lines at the tucked in points along the sides.

Perhaps the most ill-fitting compartments in any monument is at Mill of Fintray where the combination of pit and ditch boundaries is coupled with three internal divisions. The middle two parts of the site, for instance, appear to abut one another at a strange angle, giving the site its slightly curved overall appearance. The lateral ditches of the western of the two do not meet the corners of the other and either could plausibly have been earlier.

Bennybeg and Bannockburn 2 both display similar phenomenon, and could even be described as horned enclosures. Although at first glance, Bennybeg looks like it has an internal division with two pit-alignments running apart from one another from the corners, in fact there is a gap between the rectangular *cursus* enclosure and a pit-defined U-shaped enclosure (with the 'horns' as its sides) as mentioned in chapter 3 (see plate 8.2). There is an almost identical relationship between the enclosures at Bannockburn with a rectangular post-defined site terminating beside a U-shaped pit-defined enclosure. (English *cursus* sites including Barford and North Stoke terminate at U-shaped enclosures (Loveday 1989)). This is not really an internal division, but it is still a division where the alignment of the longer enclosure is replicated in (or replicating) the smaller structure. In a sense it is another segment of the enclosure, different in character. (At Woodhill, the pits are more widely spaced along the septal line, and at Bannockburn, the 'horn' enclosure is pitted). Stonehenge Lesser *cursus* had an internal division but one end of the site was shown by excavation to be open (J Richards 1990), essentially defining horns (although the site was rapidly back-filled). There is also the potential parallel (or association) with the horns associated with barrows and long cairns.

### 8.5. Parallelism.

Multiple boundaries are increasingly recognised in Scotland's *cursus* sites, both ditch and pit-defined. This is where there are more than the requisite pair of



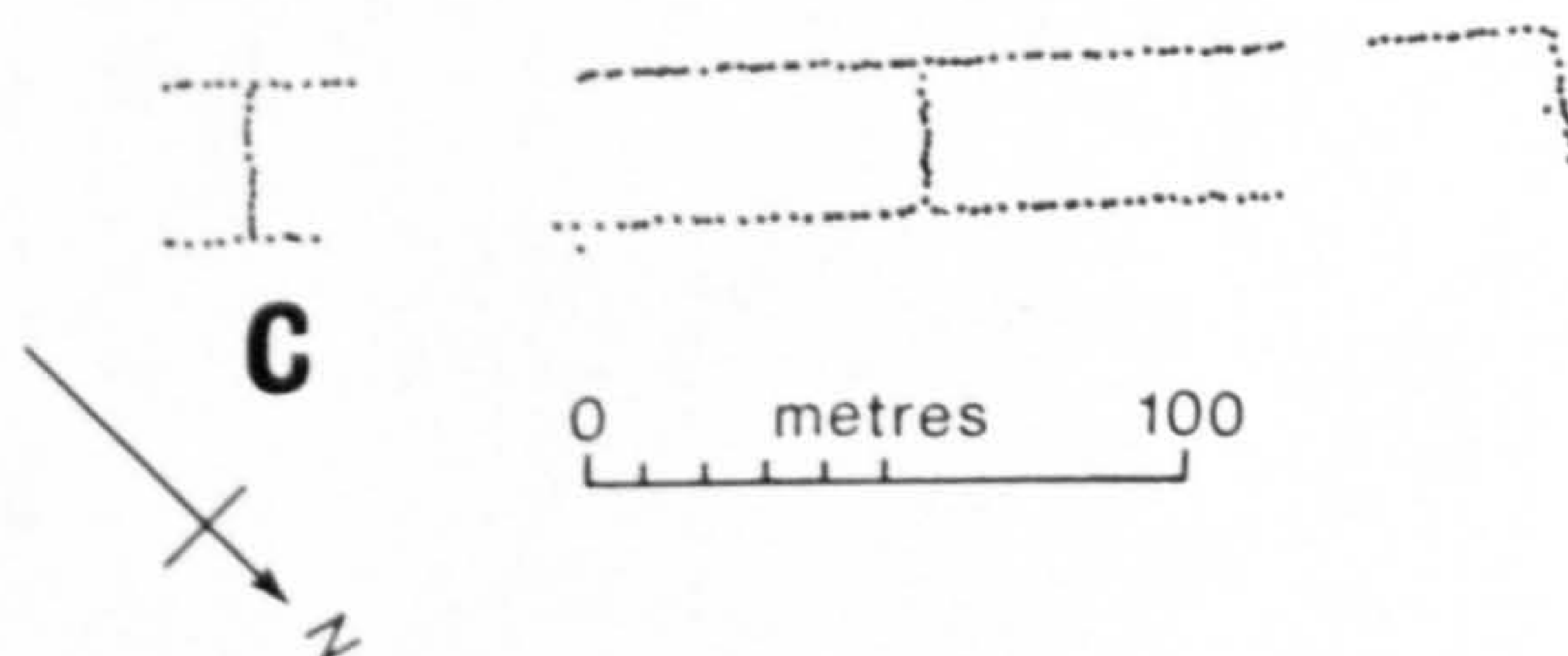
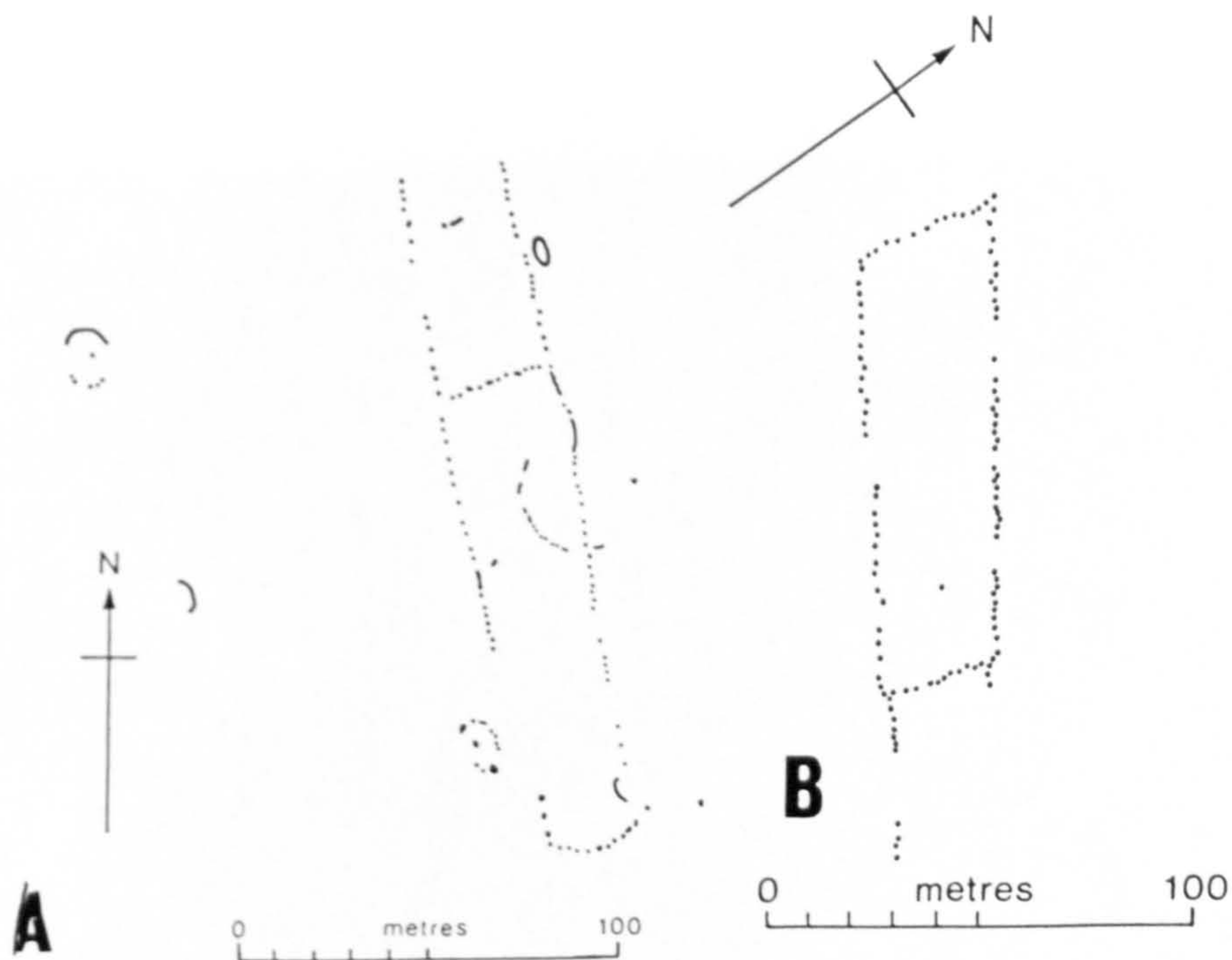


Plate 8.4 (top) Internal divisions at the pitted sites.  
 (A Kinalty B. Balneaves Cottage C. Milton of Guthrie).  
 (after Brophy 1998a).  
 Plate 8.5 (bottom) Plan of Inchbare 2 based on RCAHMS  
 transcription (from Brophy 1995, fig.40).





Plate 8.2 Bennybeg. The cropmarks in this blown-up photograph suggest that the horns are actually part of a distinct U-shaped enclosure. The gap between this and the cursus is marked by 2 at either end. Arrows indicate the south and west sides of this enclosure. Two further arrows towards the bottom of the photo mark one of the many irregularities in the lateral alignments. (© CUCAP).



parallel boundaries defining the cursus monument. The majority of the evidence for this comes from aerial photographs.

Perhaps the most elaborate set of lateral boundaries is to be found at the two Inchbare sites (fig. 8.5). The southern of the two (*cursus* 1) is essentially a rectangular pit-defined enclosure with one terminal visible. Immediately to the south, a pit-alignment runs parallel to the cursus itself for a distance of at least 55m and there is the hint of a second exterior parallel line further to the south, consisting of five or six pits amidst an indeterminate scattering of pits. 230m to the north, a second cursus has been recorded (*cursus* 2), running parallel to the three or four pit-alignments described. Although it is described as a *cursus* monument, it appears from the air as a series of at least six parallel pit-alignments with precious little evidence that they ever formed any kind of an enclosure. There is a hint of one alignment turning to the north at one end for a distance of two pits. Exactly which two are supposed to define the *cursus* is unclear (the NMRS suggests the two best defined lines) and the relationship they share through time is impossible to tell. Perhaps there only ever were two visible at anyone time defining a linear space or *cursus* enclosure. It is also possible that the cropmarks represent a set of parallel standing timbers, reminiscent in plan to the parallel stone rows of Caithness and Sutherland, an idea which will be explored in the next chapter. The alignment which both sites follow must have had some significance, being marked by perhaps ten or more parallel pit alignments, perhaps being reinforced with new lines being added, replacements or additions to the complex.

The enormous cursus enclosure at Monktonhall, Inveresk, is defined by multiple ditches on all three known sides. The terminal has a triple ditch, the eastern side a double ditch (excavated in 1984 - see Hanson 1984), and it may well be that the western side is marked by a quadruple ditch. Each side has one distinctly clear ditch, with the others slightly fainter, and apparently more irregular. The fourth ditch on the western side, lying to the exterior side of the main 'ditch' is a good example of this (plate 8.3).





Plate 8.3 Monktonhall, Inveresk. Note cropmarks of the double ditches (3) at the terminal, and the triple or even quadruple ditches on the west side (4) (© RCAHMS).



Aerial photographs of Carmichael Cottages suggest that it too has a double ditch boundary for at least part of its southern side. Armit (1995) feels that this is unusual enough to throw doubt on the site being a *cursus*, although it is not as unusual as he thinks. Close examination of the cropmarks of Milton of Rattray, for instance, suggest that there is a third pit-alignment running parallel to the north of the west end of the northern alignment, although this could also be a blurring in the cropmark.

Parallel lines seem important around the Holywood area, as I outlined in the developing interpretations of these sites in chapter 6. I discussed the two distinct ritual foci which, I argued, could reflect a change in focus for the whole monument building programme, even the cosmology, in this area. The first alignment was embodied in Holywood 1 *cursus*, pointing towards a possible henge, and running parallel to the so-called pit-defined *cursus* at Holm. The second alignment ran through Gallaberry, Holywood 2 *cursus*, and the pairs of causeways within Holywood 1. Keeping things on the same alignment meant keeping it alive and meaningful, perhaps stretching back to include pre-*cursus* enclosures (if that is what the post-holes in Holywood 2 represent). Re-cuts of the ditches (Thomas 1999) again reinforced and re-vitalised these alignments.

Holm pit-defined *cursus* is a triple setting of post alignments with relative stratigraphy unknown (Thomas 1998a). This set of triple alignments was created by posts, continually erected and then burnt down, again suggesting the reinforcement of this alignment which actually (and perhaps incidentally) runs parallel to Holywood 1, over a kilometre to the west.

It has been suggested that Douglasmuir initially stood as three parallel post-alignments (the so-called terminal and septal lines). The gaps indicated in these lines (fig. 8.2) were initially used by Barclay (in Kendrick 1995) to back-up the suggestion of an free-standing E-shaped enclosure. Later the site was interpreted more along the lines of ritualistic use with a suggestion of these breaks as 'entrances' allowing straight passage through the enclosure and possible passing



the large pit / post-hole in the centre. From this it is postulated that these three parallels perhaps stood alone before later being joined by the longer sides (Barclay & Maxwell 1998, pages 123-4).

### 8.6. Contrasting sides

The lateral ditches, pit lines and post lines of these sites display an irregularity which suggests that the sides were constructed at different times, or to different standards. This phenomena has been noticed at some of England's cursus sites such as North Stoke which has one very straight side and one rather more irregular side. The excavator suggested that this was the result of one side being built initially, and the other off-set from it, hence the less regular form (Case 1982). This is reminiscent of the very unusual pair of linear cropmarks at Mains of Gourdie, with one straight side and a second which by way of contrast wobbles noticeably and is anything but straight. It is fair to suggest here that this could hardly relate to an off-set construction method, unless it had gone drastically wrong (see fig. 3.19).

A slightly different contrast was noticed by excavators at Douglasmuir, Bannockburn and Fox Plantation. In each case, the post-holes / pits on one side were spaced further apart than on the other side. At Douglasmuir, for instance, it is very noticeable that the western side has smaller gaps between the post-holes than the eastern half. This was emphasised by Barclay & Maxwell who suggest that the almost mathematical precision of the number of pits around each side is of vital importance ("..the west side comprises 58 pits, the east only 53..." (1998, 123). The pits in the parallel alignments of Fox Plantation were noticeable wider spaced in the eastern of the pair (fig. 8.6; MacGregor *et al* 1996).

### 8.7. A focus on terminals - kinks, gigantism and pre-cursus activity

Loveday (1985) has discussed the regularity with which bank barrow sites seem to have especially large terminals or rounded mounds at one or either end. Furthermore, he suggested that these were original features, later extended (or joined) by the construction of a long mound, completing the bank barrow form.



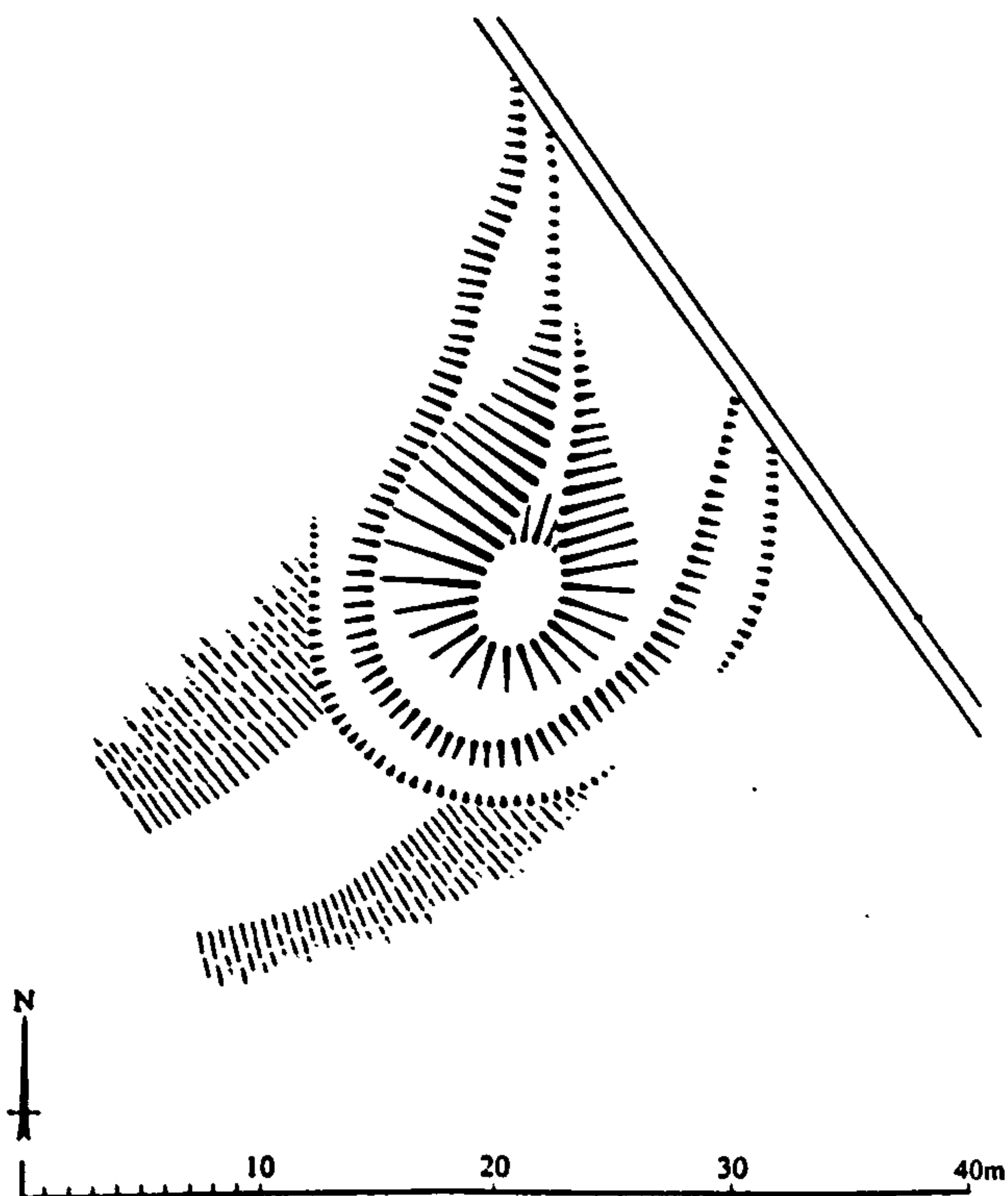
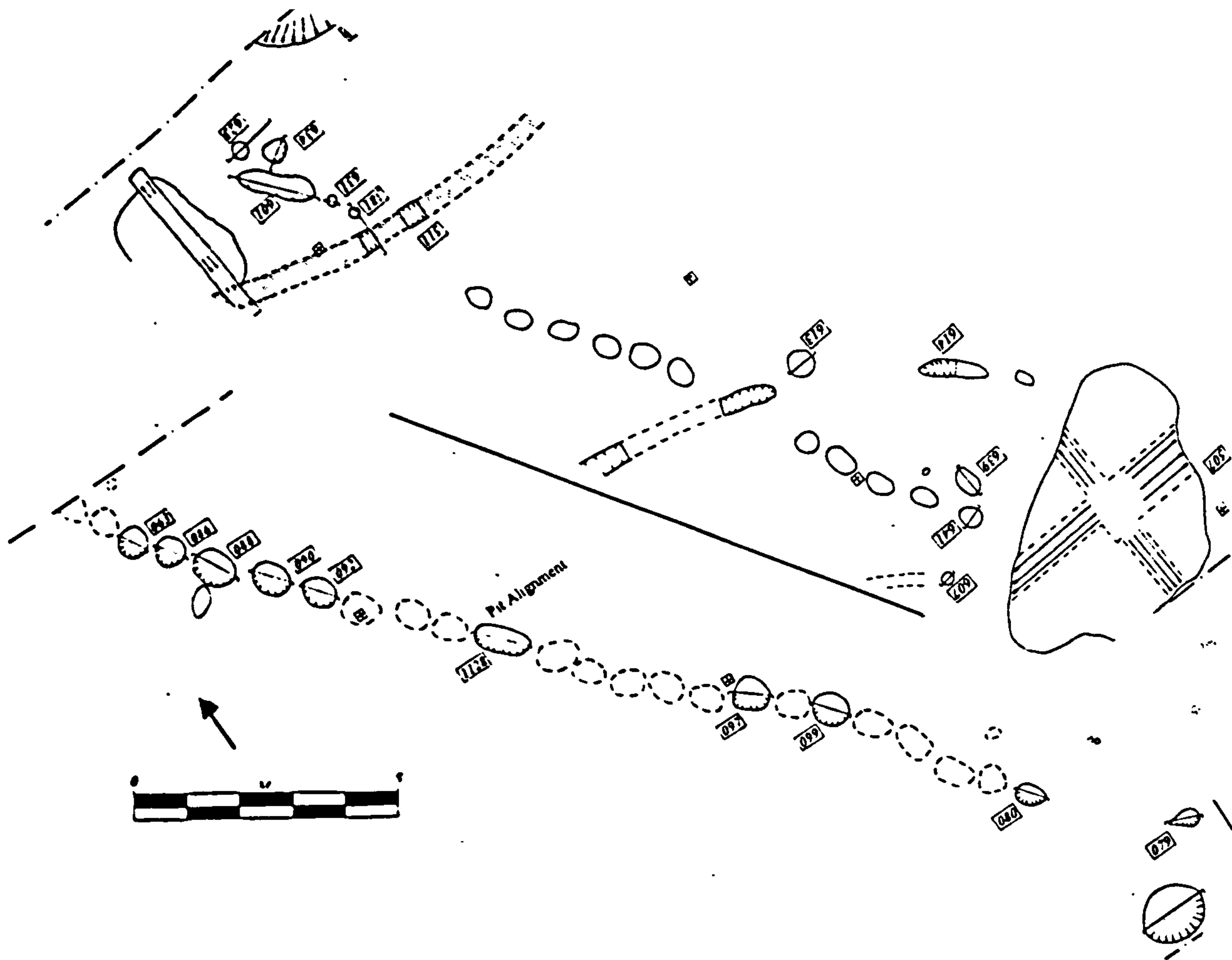


Figure 8.6 (top) The two pit-alignments from Fox Plantation, removed from their context and placed side by side (they are actually 30m apart). The pits of the eastern alignments are more widely spaced (after MacGregor et al 1996).

Figure 8.7 (bottom) Tom's Knowe terminal. The long mound meets it at an angle forming a kink (from RCAHMS 1997, fig.99).



This can certainly be seen at the Cleaven Dyke, already discussed at some length earlier in this chapter. The north-western terminal is clearly not of a linear nature causing Bradley to suggest that it was a round barrow attached to the end of the monument (Barclay & Maxwell 1998). It is now clear that this is the original part of the earthwork, which was added to it. The monument grew away from it. Interestingly, the mound at the south-east end kinks dramatically at this point to the south. (Several other sections terminals are of exaggerated size; and the south-east end of section-break Y has a kink).

Many of the sites loosely classed as bank barrows share the characteristics of having large terminals, and / or kinked terminals. The Eskdalemuir bank barrow(s), for instance, adjoins two larger terminals at either end. The Tom's Knowe terminal occupies the southern end of a promontory, set back from its edge. It consists of a large sub-circular mound that tails off into a long mound (fig. 8.7). The chronological relationship is unclear - which came first? The oval mound is off-set from the alignment of the long mound at a slight angle, another kink. To the north, the Lamb Knowe terminal occupies a less dominant location, but is again of a different character from the long mound. Approaching the terminal the mound widens until it meets a prominent circular mound (although this time there is no kink). At both ends, then, the barrow-like terminals are much more substantial than the adjoining banks.

The megalithic bank barrow of Auchenlaich has a kink towards the north-north-west end, a product either of recent field clearance or an embellishment of the monument. The "original mound appears to have been extended by about 20m, on a slightly different alignment, by the addition of a considerable amount of field-cleared stone (although it resembles the 'terminal deviations noted on the Cleaven Dyke and elsewhere)" (Foster & Stevenson in Brophy 1998a, 106). The south-south-east end of the bank is the original trapezoidal chambered cairn and the monument rises towards this terminal (although' this may also be related to robbing).



## Interpretations

Cropmark sites also display kinked terminals, particularly the 'bank barrows'. The western end of Kilmany seems to kink slightly to the south about 25m from the terminal ditch. Interestingly, this sudden change in alignment occurs soon after the monument leaves the plateau it runs across and runs steeply downhill. Two further cropmark sites, both in Dumfries and Galloway, also have interesting terminals. Springbank appears to have a circular enclosure, roughly 12m in diameter, in the probable western terminal area. The parallel linear cropmarks running up to it abruptly change alignment half way along their visible length slightly to the north, and may again curve by a very small amount just before reaching the circular feature. A circular cropmarking discernible at the eastern extent may be a similar feature at the opposite end or a rounded terminal. The linear cropmarks at Redbank are sinuous with at least two directional changes along its visible length of 200m. It seems to be narrowing towards a point at the western end.

Two cropmark sites have kinks or changes of direction in one lateral ditch immediately before the terminal. Holywood 2 has a slight flattening in of the ditch on the eastern side just as it curves into the rounded terminal and excavation has failed to provide any particular physical reason why it does this (Thomas 1999). The eastern terminal of Old Montrose is set at an acute angle to the southern side and the ditch approaching it curves outwards before turning sharply into the terminal. In both of these sites the opposing lateral ditch area is regular. (Holywood 2 cursus also changes alignment slightly about half way along its length).

Two further sites are worth mentioning in this context. At Douglasmuir, Kendrick (1995) noted that the terminal post-holes are obviously deeper than in the lateral lines suggesting that the posts also could have been larger here. The unusual bank barrow site of Muirton is one of the very few sites in the gazetteer which appears, unlike those concentrated on in this discussion, to have had no terminal boundary. It is an open-ended monument. The open areas at each end



are instead ‘filled’ with a large pit or post-hole, a different type of terminal focus for the monument.

The terminal areas are foci of activity, both in prehistory and the present. Their shape has been the basis of simplistic chronological divisions suggested for rounded and square enclosures (Hedges & Buckley 1981) and Loveday’s terminal typology (1985). Terminals are often excavated, illustrated in Scotland by 1993 excavations at the Cleaven Dyke (Barclay & Maxwell 1993) or digs at Holywood 1 and 2 (Thomas 1999), and it is no different in England.

There is also convincing evidence that *cursus* terminals were focused on pre-cursus places, marked by traces like pits, post-holes and naturally prominent locations (see previous chapter). The kink at the northern terminal of Holywood 2, for instance, may have respected earlier activity represented by a series of unusual pit and post features adjacent to its inner edge. “It is .... notable that at the point that these post-holes occur is also then point at which the *cursus* changes alignment slightly, as if around some pre-existing feature which it was deemed desirable to enclose between the ditches” (Thomas 1999, 110). He also suggests elsewhere that an enormous pit full of cobbles beneath a mass of burnt material, and located in the centre of the terminal area where the bank would have stood, was earlier than the monument, a focus of pre-enclosure activity (1998a, 160). A large pit-like cropmark in the southern terminal area appears as a hole in the ground and may relate to a modern action of some kind.

The so-called fire-pit (P59) at Bannockburn 2 is cut by two of the enclosure boundary post-holes and has produced earlier radiocarbon dates. Significantly, it is located on the terminal of the enclosure, in this case, right on the north-east corner. It was much wider than even the biggest post-hole. It produced by the standards of the other features quite a few artefacts, and a lot of burnt material and stone, including the one piece of pot on the whole site which stood out as not being part of the Early / Middle Neolithic assemblage gathered from other features. This was a much coarser sherd (Cowie in Rideout 1997). The weight



and size of sherds is on average greater here than anywhere else in either enclosure (about half of the assemblage). The excavator saw this pit as an early focus of activity. “It seems likely that this was a cooking pit” (Tavener 1987, 72).

The focus of activity at Upper Largie certainly seems to be where the *cursus* terminal is. As well as being where the *cursus* terminated there is also a timber circle centred on the same location and an avenue terminating at its south-east corner. Roughly in the centre of the relatively straight terminal is a large oval pit, over 5m long with a post-ring circling it. Terry suggests that this “may represent the earliest activity on the site” (1997, 21). At Douglasmuir, a large possible focal pit (BEA) is located in the central area of the north half of the monument, closer to the septal division than the terminal. The pit itself was very much the largest and was dug, immediately back-filled, and then used as a post-hole (Kendrick 1995). Two large post-holes abut one another at the north-west corner of the enclosure, but these seem in character with the irregular nature of the boundary rather than exceptional.

A few cropmark sites have a suggestion of some kind of terminal focus. Bennybeg is perhaps the best example, with the horns at the north end and a large pit positioned symmetrically on the exterior side of the southern terminal line of the *cursus*.

### 8.8. Alignments and being aligned on.

These *cursus* monuments refer to other monuments or, more likely, places, outwith themselves. They seem to do this by pointing towards them and, in a few cases, other places themselves refer to the *cursus*. These are superficial observations, supposing that at some point these two places were both significant places at the same time. Some are obviously not contemporary and there is a compelling argument that these newer enclosures referred to the past in some way. Even if the *cursus* was defunct, overgrown, it could still be a place of memory or of the ancestors or myth. The *cursus* itself could be linked in some



way to earlier sites. The themes here are reminiscent of the alignments on natural places discussed in the previous chapter.

The Hollywood complex, discussed in more depth in earlier chapters, involves several aligning monuments, none so startling as the relationship between Hollywood 2 and the 12 Apostles stone circle. This is not a new observation (see for instance Brophy 1995; Burl 1995). “Processions of people may have approached the circle via a long linear avenue, known as a ‘cursus’ monument” (Solway Heritage 1999). The stone circle may mark an important early place which the cursus pointed to or which the builders deliberately referenced the earlier cursus in siting the stones. Gallaberry *cursus* points towards Hollywood 1 and 2 and the 12 Apostles, although from a distance of some 4km.

Two other *cursus* monuments may share a close relationship with standing stones, although not by aligning on them. Dunadd, as discussed, is situated on the valley floor of the River Add. Two pairs of standing stones on the opposite side of the river and to the south both align on the *cursus*, as well as each other (Dunamuck I and II according to Thom *et al* 1991). The pit-defined site of Craggish House runs roughly parallel to a former alignment of at least four standing stones 260m to the south.

Alignments involving burial monuments are apparently uncommon, unlike the chalkland sites in England. A long barrow, Herald Hill, points towards the low knoll on which the Cleaven Dyke dies out at its south-east end (Barclay & Maxwell 1997, 1998). This is an interesting relationship, as one would expect the long barrow to be a forerunner of the final constructional phases of the Dyke. This suggests that perhaps the knoll itself was significant enough to point towards. Maybe this is why the Dyke was constructed to this point. (Other burial mounds tend to have been more closely connected to the cursus or bank barrows, incorporated into its fabric, and such sites are discussed below). The cropmark complex at Blairhall shows that a barrow cemetery, which we would expect to be later than such an enclosure, runs parallel to the cursus. The cemetery consists of



at least five barrows of varying size, each with a centrally placed pit burial, just to the north. This suggests, as is entirely possible, that the cursus was still visible as an earthwork in the Bronze Age and was deemed important enough to refer to in the burial architecture.

There are a few examples of relationships not with monuments but with lithic industry. There are several examples of lithic scatters near *cursus* monuments - the Cleaven Dyke, Old Montrose and Muirton to name just three. Drybridge cursus aligns on the location of a flint scatter within the meander area which it occupies, as well as being surrounded by several other scatters in the riverside area. The material includes Mesolithic lithics (MacNeill 1976). Mains of Springhill rectilinear enclosure in Aberdeenshire also shares a relationship with traces of stoneworking, in this case aligning on the nearby Den of Boddam flint mines (Saville 1994).

There are a number of linear monuments which align upon one another. Bennybeg aligns on Broich, and Broich on Bennybeg. This relationship is between ditch- and pit-defined sites and so the relative temporality of these is interesting. There are two examples of *cursus* sites being related to avenues. The later pit avenue at Holm cuts across the so-called cursus and one of the pits cuts through a cursus post-hole (Thomas & Leivers 1988). At Upper Largie, a pit avenue runs up to the south-eastern corner of the possible pit-defined cursus, and slightly opened out as it reached its end here (Terry 1997).

### 8.9 Incorporation.

Still closer relationships can be seen at some sites, where monuments intersect or incorporate one another. Not only can this tell us about the way these sites may have been used but they can also indicate the state of survival of the monuments at certain times. Several cursus monuments have barrows, linear cropmarks and enclosures overlying them.



## Interpretations

Broich is perhaps the best example, with a small pit-circle lying within a break in the western lateral ditch. As with such relationships viewed only as cropmarks, it is impossible to tell whether the pit-circle inhabits a gap in the ditch or if the cursus was constructed around it. The location of Crieff barrow, to the north of the pit-circle, would also have lain on the line of the cursus ditch, or very close to it. A presumably later palisaded enclosure intersects the southern terminal area of the cursus. This has interesting implications for whether the cursus ditch and bank were visible as earthworks then or not (they would have been within the settlement).

The western terminal of Old Montrose was later used as an Iron Age enclosed settlement (fig. 7.1) and cropmarks of round barrows and ring-ditches lie within the enclosure. A square barrow is placed upon the location of the cursus ditch. At least two round barrows lie across the ditches at Blairhall. Holywood 1 contains a ring-ditch amongst other cropmarks within its boundaries, but it would have sat where the bank would be expected to be. Post-holes were also found in the north terminal area here. At Holywood 2, a series of post-alignments were found internally following the inner edge of the location of the bank (Thomas 1999). As mentioned, one of the Holm post lines was cut by a later ring-ditch (and avenue). Three standing monuments seem to include earlier round mounds or burial monuments - the Cleaven Dyke, Tom's Knowe (and perhaps Lamb Knowe as well) and Auchenlaich. (In the case of the former two the mounds mimic burial mounds).

Finally, it is worth noting that a surprisingly large number of sites are located within or very close to Roman sites. Gallaberry runs parallel to, and is even overlain at one end by, Gallaberry Temporary Camp. Fourmerkland and Trailflat were both discovered within Roman forts after re-interpretation of earlier photographs (as was the Neolithic long enclosure at Inchtuthil (Barclay & Maxwell 1991)). Tullichettle and Craggish are both close to the complex of fort and camps at Dalginross. The Cleaven Dyke and Monktonhall were both wrongly



interpreted as Roman features (the former a *vallum*, the latter a road), and both lie close to major Roman complexes.

### 8.10. Hybrids.

The clear cut typological divisions do not work for the Cleaven Dyke (bank barrow / *cursus*), Mill of Fintray (ditch and pit-defined), or Holywood 1 and 2 (ditch and possibly post-defined). All of these include morphological traits of two monument types or bounded forms.

### 8.11. Summing up

These two chapters have addressed a series of themes and observations about the sites called *cursus* monuments in this thesis. These are divided into two distinct chapters under the general distinction of nature (chapter 7) and culture (this chapter) but I would now like to argue that even when things are drawn together under these two seemingly obvious and clear-cut categories there is ambiguity and over-lapping.

To take one example, let us consider the focus on terminals. It seems quite clear to me from my walks and visits to these sites that they seem to concentrate in various ways on the terminals. Very often they will be located on prominent locations. These either have a view over water, a flood plain, or up and down a valley. They may be built up against or exploit natural features to heighten the experience. However, the internal or central parts of some of these sites seem to be less concerned with external vision or prominence. There is a hollow half way along Holywood 1 and Drylawhill passes through a depression.

The concentration on terminals is not purely a case of exploiting the natural topography however. There are clear architectural reasons for believing that the ends of these monuments were important. They are kinked or built to an exaggerated size, to dominate the enclosure. Often they seem to be the original structural component which was then added to.



## Interpretations

These natural and cultural concerns begin to blur at places like the Cleaven Dyke, Broich and Tom's Knowe, where the cursus incorporates topographical features as if they were part of the architecture. We have to consider the possibility that either no such distinction was drawn in the Neolithic, or perhaps even that there was not really any way of telling what had been built by ancestors and what had always been there. There are elements of mimicry which suggest that if there was such a distinction, there were attempts to allude the new monument to the world into which it was being placed.

Earthwork and timber monuments, by their very materiality, seem to be of the landscape and part of the landscape. The grassing over of mounds and silting of ditches were the kinds of things that happened to similar features occurring naturally. Timbers rotted and decayed like dying trees. The monuments may have looked like the land all around, or may have been kept clean and distinctly different. There would always be a tendency to return to nature and the original raw material.

These chapters are full of such ambiguities, and cursus sites perhaps were to. Using these observations I will now go on to think about what they could mean for our interpretations of *cursus* sites. What do they mean to us and what could they have meant and been perceived as in the past?



## **Chapter 9. Towards a post-processional archaeology of cursus monuments.**

### **9.1. Introduction**

The previous two chapters have listed a series of 'themes' common to cursus monuments, divided into 'natural' and 'cultural' categories. As I argued at the end of chapter 8 these are not as distinct as one would imagine and often there are similar concerns indicated by both a constructional technique and the topographical location of a site. Whilst Clare (1986) saw such recurrent practices as part of the varied but nevertheless related henge tradition I am not trying to do the same with cursus sites in Scotland. This chapter is intended to attempt to contextualise these themes into a wider context and to try and draw the natural and cultural together. This is not intended to lead to generalised explanations for cursus monuments of such an architectural tradition. Rather I want to use this discussion as another stage in the critique of typologies in archaeology. This will be taken up again to a conclusion of sorts in the following chapter.

What I want to do here is to work through an eclectic range of interpretations of these cursus monuments. It would be wrong to say that we can ever know what cursus monuments were for, or what they meant to those who encountered them. The drive for certainty and for proof is perhaps a modern condition. Instead, as an imaginative archaeologist, my experiences and analysis of the corpus at my disposal has led me to suggest a few possibilities of what they might have meant. The ideas discussed here are probably not all Neolithic experiences, nor are they ones which are meant to apply to all people or even all of the sites. These enclosures, like all things, can be meaningful but that involves people to interact with them. Each personal encounter or intervention can be seen as another entry into the biography of that place, and that includes the experiences of the archaeologist.

There is no longer a necessity to conclude with one interpretation. The post-modern ideas of multivocality and polysemy have led us to begin to think about many readings of the same archaeological places and problems even by the same



person (Tilley 1991; Hodder 1997). My research will not provide a conclusive answer to the cursus problem only a series of possible answers. These are not supposed to be mutually exclusive and may have operated at any one site at the same time or in localised contexts. In the following chapter I will suggest that we should not restrict our interpretations to specific monument types.

These are possibilities, how it could have been, how it has been for me, and perhaps how it never was and never could be. As archaeologists, we can only interpret and suggest just as anybody else who has come across the sites has also had to do. These include the barrow builders laying to rest their dead alongside the ancient enclosure at Blairhall, or the villagers living within the terminal at Old Montrose. People scraping a living, farming their rigs which sweep across the Cleaven Dyke. There are those who drive forestry vehicles through the Dyke or others who catch a glance of its clear cropmarks from passing British Airways' planes (as I once did). These are places which have entered the consciousness of people in the Neolithic and ever since to some extent or another, from Pennant to McOmie, to the present day. They are meaningful and yet elusive and always a cursus problem. Here we have some ideas and some stories about what they mean to me.

### 9.2. Cursus monuments as symbolic rivers

*"I think I am right in saying that I was the first person in Britain to develop a passion for good design. But what enormous opportunities were missed by the generations who preceded me! The River Thames, for instance, has many major design faults, and is long overdue for a corporate makeover in order to radically alter public perception of it as something 'out-dated' and 'worn out'. We have accordingly developed a [two]-point Thames Re-Imaging Plan:*

*Design Problem: The Thames curves randomly, without due regard for the sadly outdated buildings alongside it. This is bad design: fussy, obtrusive, and lacking the 'human dimension'.*



## Interpretations

*Design Solution: Radically re-design the Thames, banishing all fussy curves to form a marvellous bold and simple straight line, in a stroke making it user-friendly, democratic, gutsy, passionate and ready for the new demands of the 21st century.*

*Design Problem: 'The River Thames' is a tired, yesterdayish logo, too strongly associated in the public perception with a lack of vibrancy and drive. It is crying out for a radical re-think in its corporate identity to reflect its new .... user-friendly, updated competitive edge.*

*Design Solution: A new corporate identity for an old River, radically altering perceptions with a dramatic new logo, incorporating a go-ahead new one-million-pound designer typeface that is impacting for change.*

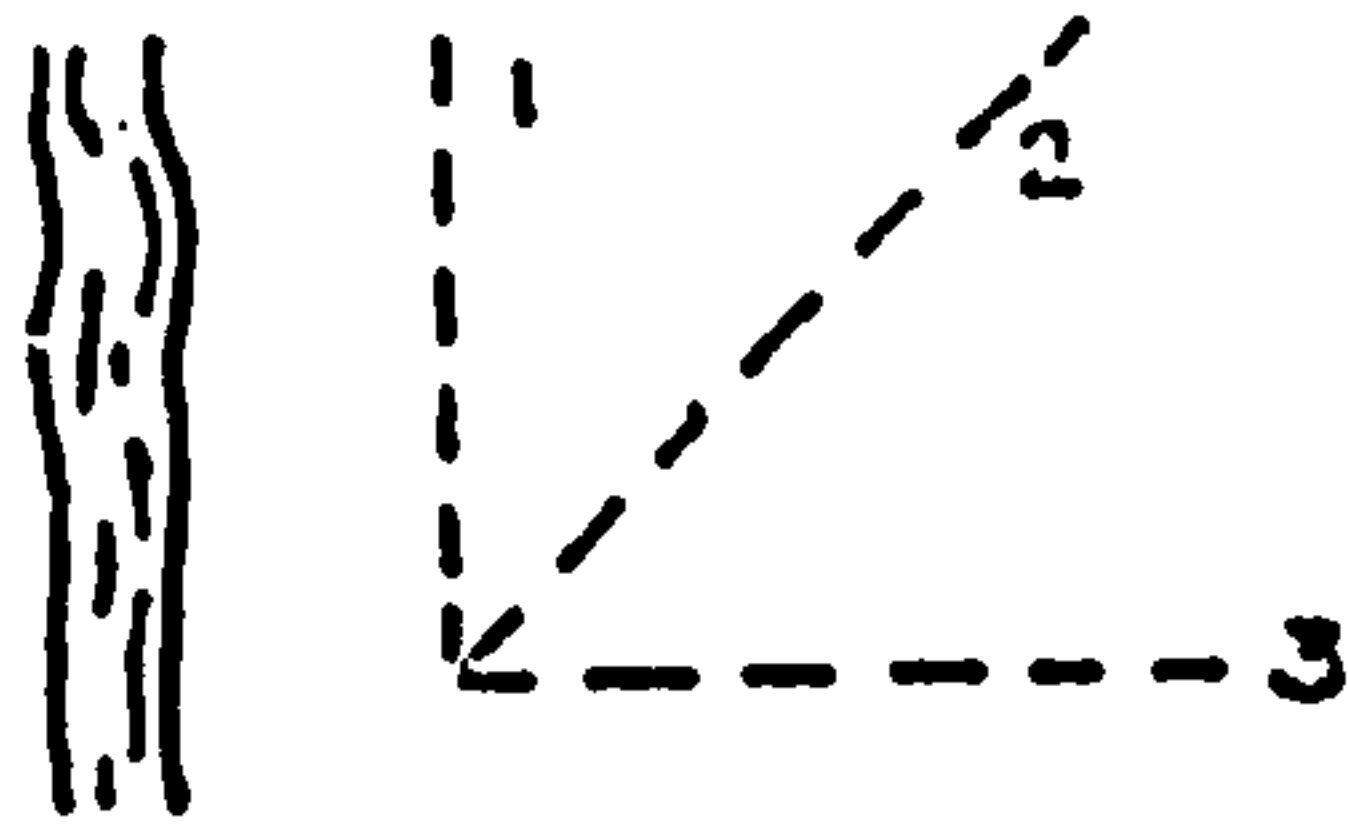
thaMes: the riVer”

(Extract from Sir Terence Conran's Diary, *Private Eye* 926, 13 June 1997, 24).

Of most striking note for me, especially from my experiences, is the recurring links with rivers and water. This is certainly not a new observation. It was noted in *A Matter of Time* (RCHME 1960) that many sites lay close to rivers suggesting the rivers themselves were sacred. Loveday (1985) argued that the relationship was functional, more one of practicality. Straight enclosures of several kilometres length needed, to remain on level ground, large flat areas such as flood plains and gravel terraces (fig. 9.1). Yet I tend to agree with Hedges & Buckley who believed that "the motivations of the builders extended beyond the physical limitations of the topography" (1981, 10). The relationship, it seems to me, is more than statistical or practical or coincidental, and has significance beyond the bounds of cursus monuments.

I have already discussed at some length the physical and spatial relationships of rivers and cursus monuments in Scotland, England and Wales. The sites are





A) 200m or less from river  
1 2 3



B) 200m - 500m



C) 500m - 1000m



D) Totals

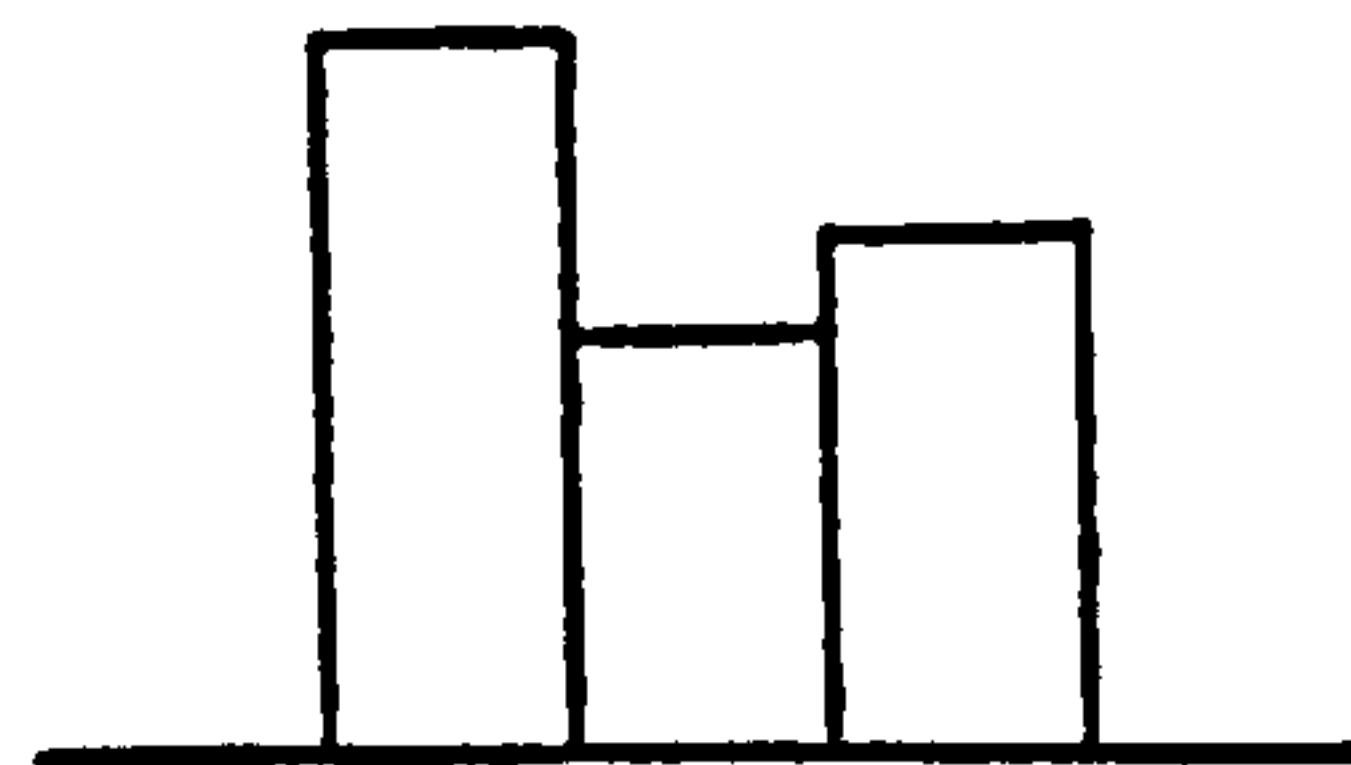


Figure 9.1 Loveday's histograms showing the relationship between cursus monuments and rivers (1985, fig.13.1)



## Interpretations

almost all located either near rivers or streams; on river valley floors and terraces, or crossed by them. What significance can we take from such a relationship?

Tilley discussed the symmetry of the journey, to and beyond the long barrow within the Dorset cursus (see section 7.3.), and the relationship of cursus and water here suggests some element of meaning was intended. The participant(s) travelled down, crossed water, climbed up to the barrow and across a ridge and plateau, moved down again into a second valley and crossing water, then climbed back up to the final terminal. "Within the enclosed world of the cursus the Gussage Cow Down barrow is placed at a high, dry point within liminal space, and water must be crossed to reach and leave it" (Tilley 1994, 198).

Each 'surprise' also has a watery element. A water crossing follows each (or at least this is the next physical encounter that we can perceive). Indeed, there seems to be a pattern that can be detected in relation to encounters with water. Firstly, a 'surprise', followed by a crossing of a river / marsh, and this was then followed by a linear bank - either a long barrow or terminal, or a terminal which looks like a long barrow. To give an example, one would pass the Pleistocene cliff face (a river cliff), then cross the boggy valley bottom, and finally face an uphill climb to the Gussage Cow Down long barrow within the cursus. Also, with each crossing of a river, visibility of the Penbury Knoll - the highest point of land in the area - is lost. It can be spotted from all places along the cursus except within the valleys.

Bradley (in Barrett *et al* 1991) felt that the rivers crossing cursus monuments meant that it could not have been a processional monument, an argument already postulated by Dymond (1966) for Rudston A cursus. Tilley (1994) argues that this instead added to the processional (linear) experience of the site and may even have added a seasonal dimension to the control of these enclosures. So what could be so important about water, and how do cursus sites conceptually relate to rivers?



## Interpretations

Well, rivers are paradoxical. Alexandre Dumas wrote of the Rhine, it "is an object of fear or hope, a symbol of love or hate, the principle of life and death" (1991, 239-40). Modern conceptions of rivers are contradictory. We have several metaphors for rivers, for what they represent to us and to society. They can be metaphors for linearity and circularity, the internal and external, and for social time and individual time (Cosgrove 1993; Schama 1995).

Modern river studies employ various images for different parts of rivers that involve parts of the human body. The river has its origins at the head and ends at the mouth. Yet these external classifications are contradicted (and strengthened) by the further comparison of rivers as parts of the blood circulation system of the land (as it were), flowing with veins and arteries. Such metaphors have long been applied considering river systems carrying water just as the circulation system carries blood through the body. So on a purely metaphorical level we have rivers as representing both the exterior and the interior of the human body. (This is not merely a paradox - it can also represent the harmonious whole).

Rivers metaphorically represent time. We could, for instance, see the river as encapsulating Braudel's three distinct levels of human time, summed up as "the history of the event, the history of conjuncture and the history of long duration.... episodic, cyclical and structural" by Gosden (1994, 133). The history of event involves individual action and the repercussions of that action. The history of conjuncture exists on a larger time scale, in terms of trends and cycles. Finally, long duration (*longue durée*) "underlies both these forms of history and derives from people's place in nature and the effect that a particular set of space and material settings had on them" (*ibid.* 133-4). The merits of this type of breaking down of time are less important here than the metaphorical relationships they have with rivers.

Geographers attribute individual human ageing characteristics to rivers - youth (the young river near the source), maturity (middle part of the river), and old age (from flood plain to estuary). The river is an integral part of the hydrographic



cycle. Schama (1995) identifies 'Old Father Thames' as a time-line running through south-east England. "To go upstream was, I knew, to go backwards: from metropolitan din to ancient silence; westward toward the source of the waters, the beginnings of Britain in the Celtic limestone" (*ibid.* 5). The river here is *longue durée*, the slow stream of time, a constant yet changing factor around and within which the acts of human agency have been played out.

The river, then, is a 'time-line', and represents linearity, with a beginning and an end, a birth and a death (once again, individual time scale). The age of water transportation meant a river was a form of transport, linking A to B. Yet this is a further contradiction. Rivers have been described as a circulation system because they form part of a circularity which flows and maintains life. Rivers are part of a natural re-cycling of water, the hydrographic cycle. Therefore, rivers can represent both lines and circles, both individual and social history (lines of human agency, circles of 'conjuncture', long term lines). "So the rhythms of fluvial death and rebirth, the transmutability of water .... described a cycle that, provided the proper remembrances were observed, would be self-regulating" (*ibid.* 258). The paradox of rivers could be maintained through ritual, and could provoke ritual.

A more important paradox to my argument is not found in these (mostly modern) metaphors, however, but in the ability of rivers to give life and take it away. Rivers attract human life, providing food and water, and the fertility of flood plain land is particularly attractive. However floods can destroy crops and kill, and drought can deprive. They have the potential at a less extreme level to make life more, or less, difficult. The strength of river currents and flows has lead to many folklore tales of river spirits, dragging people in (MacKinley 1895). Recent finds of human remains dated to the Late Neolithic (at Langfield Lowlands, Nottinghamshire) in gravel river bed deposits, have been interpreted either as water burials or, more likely, the remains of victims of a flood or accident (Garton *et al* 1997).



## Interpretations

Ethnographic studies involving rivers have shown them to have great significance to many contemporary groups (for instance, see Tilley 1994 and Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995). They may orientate people in the landscape, form cultural boundaries, and be part of tales and stories of the past, an aspect of maintaining group identity through social and physical survival. For others there is a powerful ritual nature to water, a symbol of purification and fertility (Douglas 1966; Turner 1967). To cross rivers and water could be seen as a liminal and important experience.

As I have discussed, then, cursus sites seem to form some kind of spatial relationship with rivers. Rivers and cursus sites have some other things in common, however. The obvious superficial connection is linearity. Just as rivers have a beginning and an end, so cursus monuments have a beginning and end. Tilley (1994) argues that the Dorset cursus only works if you travel along it in a south-westerly direction. Drybridge is most effective visually when travelling towards the south-east terminal (Brophy forthcoming b, see also chapter 6). Broich and Holywood 1 could be seen to focus movement towards their southern terminal and the Cleaven Dyke (in its final form) appears to lead to the south-east natural terminal. Rivers too have a correct way of flowing, which is obviously down stream. To go against this is difficult. Both rivers and cursus monuments suggest a certain route of travel (which may be one-way only).

Rivers have to be crossed and cursus monuments provide obstacles to movement within the landscape as well. They can be boundaries separating one area from another (Bradley 1993) and they also divide inside and outside. Some are easy to pass around, others more troublesome. Rivers can be crossed but not easily, or dryly without a boat. Cursus monuments could easily be passed across - the banks and ditches would provide little trouble to climb past - yet would anyone actually cross such a boundary? Both rivers and cursus monuments can be crossed, most easily at pre-conceived crossing points like bridges, fords or causeways. Springfield cursus, Essex, had no obvious breaks in the defining



## Interpretations

ditch leading Buckley (1988) to suggest a bridge may have allowed entrance into this sacred enclosure.

Studies of contemporary groups (or thinking of our own culture) have shown us that natural features such as rivers can become culturally defined in that they are known as places, with names and biographies, part of the human landscape. Before the architectural formalisation of the Neolithic rivers may already have had names and their own histories, part of the history of society and perhaps the world. What I want to suggest is that the next step on from this was taken - people constructed their own rivers. These are the cursus monuments we see as crop marks today.

I talked of contradiction and paradox earlier - rivers can support life and take it away. They can make every day living bearable, or intolerable. They can be uncontrollable, cutting through rocks, spreading across valleys, raging torrents. To create a river on dry land is to do so on your own terms, losing the aspects of danger, yet helping to maintain, through ritual, a focus for social life. Meanders are erased and the river becomes a straight human construct.

As I have stated, rivers and cursus monuments have several features in common, not least that one may be an artificial manifestation of the other. If cursus monuments were indeed viewed (at least metaphorically) as rivers what does this tell us about the nature of the ritual activity contained within? Firstly, it would have been processional or at least had a linear nature. It would have had a correct direction of movement which made the experience meaningful. Both these aspects mimic rivers and relate the cursus back to them. Secondly, those moving within the cursus (and this may well have been a limited group) would have the symbolic appearance of walking on water. To be within the cursus, perhaps, one was symbolically emersed in water, yet need never get one's feet wet. Parker Pearson (forthcoming) has recently suggested that people walked alongside cursus monuments, not within them. This equally could be seen as a reflection of



the relationship between cursus and river because we walk alongside rivers, not within them.

Cursus monuments may have been the arenas for ritual activity that were concerned with the same benefits rivers provided - fertility, purity, cleanliness - yet there was no associated danger of flood or drought. By creating their own rivers and ironing out the curves (and so symbolically transforming the unpredictability to predictability) they gave a medium for playing out such ritual, closer to nature. Almost certainly they would not have expected such ritual to produce immediate or permanent results (Douglas 1966), but rather they formed a focus around which society could place its concerns and hand over their problems. Paradoxically some of these problems may be related to the river itself.

The role of cursus sites in representing some kind of controllable metaphor for a river may be strengthened if those living in these areas understood the nature of river action. This adds the further contradiction of a calm exterior yet underneath cutting into riverbanks and dragging alluvial deposits, shaping and changing the river valley. The cursus would be no less of a change to the valley, and to the world. The idea of change is common, then, to water and cursus monuments.

### **9.3. Monuments of many colours**

Langston Hughes wrote of the Mississippi, "I've seen / its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset" (from Rampersad 1986).

It has become a truism to suggest that we have lost colour in the 'archaeological record'. Even our publications almost always only ever have black and white photographs. The dull grey stones, or the bland grassy bank is a facade, covering a more colourful past (in both meanings of the phrase), in the same way as we know that Laurel and Hardy did not live in a monochrome world. The traces of paint in rock art or a pot, the colourful pebbles found on excavations and the materials used in constructions suggest a multi-coloured layer of the past that has now faded away. Although cursus sites are not megalithic, they still must have



carried enough colour to make them (if nothing else) visually striking. When combined with the effects of water as already discussed, the colour may have had meaning beyond mere aesthetics.

I have primarily associated cursus monuments in the past with water and soil colours so far. There has been an emphasis on freshness and brightness. Clare (1986) suggests a relationship with henge monuments and the colour white in the form of chalk, quartz, sand and gypsum deposits. The roles of the colour white (and bright, sparkling colours) in ethnographies are not difficult to find in many such studies. Bender (1992), Tilley (1994) and Taçon (1999) highlight some such examples. Bender writes of the relationships between landscape, industrial processes, ritual, and stories where “objects exhibiting brightness (fat, blood, quartz, quartzite, cross-hatched pigment) are both aesthetically pleasing and spiritually charged” (1992, 744).

Sedlmayr argues that, “...the stained glass and stone of an early medieval cathedral act on one another to ‘shine’, ‘sparkle’, ‘glitter’, ‘dazzle’...It would be fair to say that the cathedral denies its stone character. It keeps it throughout, only it idealises it by giving it a gemlike, transfigured, vibrant aspect” (in Bender 1992, 744). As well as elevating material beyond its own materiality, colour can also help one material become a metaphor for another, so that white stone can represent bones (Tilley 1994).

By analogy, then, we can begin to think of brightly coloured cursus boundaries (and in particular I am thinking here of ditch-defined sites) as being potentially a metaphor of other things in the ‘natural’ world, or symbolically transcending the material of the site itself. Dazzling water has a ‘gemlike’ appearance, and is vibrant, making water something else (and yet still with the same physical properties, unless it is ice).

What can we say about colour and these monuments? We could now go on to look at the colour white itself, just as I looked at water in the earlier discussion.



Interpretations

The symbolic significance of individual colours has often been stressed by archaeologists, typified by a recent paper by Jones (1997) looking at Arran’s chambered cairns. The contrasting stone types used led him to suggest a series of symbolic meanings for the colours, related to both the stone type and source, which can be condensed into the following series of (structured) oppositions.

Red	:	White
Sandstone	:	Granite
South Arran	:	North Arran
Blood, flesh	:	Bones
Fertile	:	Barren
Water	:	Earth
Soft	:	Hard

This structuralist approach suggests that the tomb is a microcosm of the island (and perhaps of the world) condensed down to two polar opposites and all they represent. This framework dominated the tomb deposits, from human to artefactual. A third colour black was rather more ambiguous, aligned with red as it represented visceral blood (from the tools of this colour which were used in particular stages of butchery). Essentially, red is life, white is death, and their juxtaposition in the tomb is an attempt to rise above death and the inevitability of the life cycle (*ibid.* 6).

Interpretations of colour in archaeology have a tendency to fall into this structuralist trap (see for instance Jones 1997; Spence 1999; Jones & Bradley 1999; and for a critique Brophy & Fowler 1999). Such studies of colour and monumentality seem inspired by the structuralist anthropologist, Turner, and in particular his classic book, *Forest of Symbols* (1967). His studies of Ndembu rituals and the symbolism therein suggested to him “lateral symbolism and...other forms of dual classification” (*ibid.* 59). From this he developed a tripartite ‘mode of classification’ based around three colours (or concepts of



## Interpretations

colours) - whiteness, blackness and redness. These are the three colours identified in the tripartite cosmology of the Arran tombs (Jones 1997).

The ritual meanings of colours is based on the Myth of the Three Rivers (each a colour) and each colour represents a series of values, activities, emotions, states of being, pasts, presents and futures, as explained and learned by participants in rituals. White, for instance, stands for goodness, purity, to have power, to have no bad luck, as well as life, health, eating, laughing, washing and various positive aspects of fertility. Black, on the other hand, represents badness, bad luck, suffering, death, sexual desire and night. The more ambiguous red stands for blood of various difficult origins (animals, women and witches).

Here, white and black are opposites whilst red things are a bit of each, representing the powers and abilities which come with life, but also the impurities of living things like witches, the evil and the unlucky. "Although each of the ritual colors (sic) has a wide variety of referents, nevertheless, each has its own distinctive quality, which can be briefly expressed by saying that whiteness is positive, redness ambivalent, and blackness negative" (Turner 1967, 74).

In both this structuralist anthropology, and the later similar archaeologies, the emissions and physicality of the human body, as well as external materials of 'nature', are part of this symbolic network of oppositions. Turner saw the three colours as each representing bodily fluids related to some form of excitement, whilst Jones suggests that the colours are flesh, blood and bone. The colours are idealised generalities for geological deposits which come into opposition - white clay versus river mud for the Ndembu, sandstone versus granite on Arran. These structure the ritual activity of each society, each with ambiguous third categories for taboo or difficult material. "The point is of interest since the colours black, white and red occur consistently in archaeological contexts" (Jones & Bradley 1999, 113).



## Interpretations

Aside from the well known criticisms of structuralism (Bapty & Yates 1990; Shanks & Tilley 1987 and so on) where does this leave us in relation to cursus monuments? Such inflexible systems (stretched only to include ever more aspects of life and the world) do not tally either with the archaeological and phenomenological 'evidence' of Scotland's cursus monuments that we have seen so far. Merleau-Ponty (1962) would certainly have not subscribed to such rigid, determinate systems.

Gage (1999) argues that such systems of symbolic meanings do not account for the potential variety of colours occurring naturally or the imagination of those who perceive them. There is also an implicit assumption that all people perceive colour in the same way. The perception and understanding of colour is not something that falls along ethnic lines, nor should it be associated with 'better' or 'worse' ways of experiencing colour. Rather the understanding of colour and the way it manifests itself for those who are, say colour blind, or suffer from some degree of visual 'disability', is a valid understanding even although it falls outwith the perceived 'norms' of structuralist approaches. We must acknowledge flexibility of appearance and meaning, in keeping with the variety of sites themselves that (just like people) deny easy and convenient classification.

Colours are experienced and how they appear depends on the time and conditions of the experience. The clean cursus ditch is not always going to be clean. Water is not always going to be in a ditch and, when it is, is not always going to be white. This flexibility moves colour away from idealised hues and a list of symbolic associations. The deterministic colours of red, white, black are never this clear-cut in real life. Just as Merleau-Ponty argues that life is never black or white, so the colours we are see are never really white, but cream or off-white or greyish. Turner (1967) claimed that important substances with anomalous shades like brown river mud were classed as black by the Ndembu to fit into this over-arching typology.

Merleau-Ponty stresses the roles of both lighting conditions and the texture of a material in the colour of things. This is perceived through sensory and physical



experience, of actually being there. “The decorated stones at both sites rely mainly on the play of light and shade for their effect. Inside [the tomb] this could be manipulated by torches...some colour differentiation between pecked and unpecked stone may have aided visibility” (Lynch 1998, 64). MacGregor (in Brophy & MacGregor forthcoming) has considered the role of light in experiencing recumbant stone circles with the suggestion that these places were visited and used by night. How would this effect the physical appearance of a monument?

Perhaps it is more than the individual significances of idealised primary colours, or black and white that mattered in prehistoric places. Maybe the ability of things and their colours to change was important and the fact that this could happen in both controlled and uncontrolled ways. Colour is constantly transforming, and is fluid just like water. The ability of water to transform its appearance in terms of colour brings us back to the waterlogged *cursus* (and henges). Water changes because of reflections and transparency. It can become white, brown and grey, transparent or impenetrably opaque, dependent on what is above, below or within it. Colour is not a constant. “The changeable colour of the sun...is one of the many instances where the unstable appearance of a natural phenomenon may lie behind the refusal of early societies to organise their colour according to clearly defined hues” (Gage 1999, 111).

Colour is not a secondary characteristic of an object, but rather is intrinsically linked to the texture itself, so that colours which appear superficially identical are still not the same if one is red plastic and the other red metal (Merleau-Ponty 1962). The texture of water allows this temporal nature to the colour of water, and so whilst it superficially changes it is still water. The texture of soils and vegetation will effect the colour. These are seasonal effects or can change in the course of a day. Just as *cursus* sites may have become covered in grass and weeds so megaliths develop lichen and moss.

The visual appearance of a monument is not necessarily more important than the monument itself. Nevertheless, it could have been part of prehistoric experience.



The colours of the Arran tombs are related to the texture of the rocks of that colour but could have been experienced under various differing conditions. Colours could be seen under different lights, from near darkness to torchlight. As eyes adjusted to the darkness the colours would always be changing, increasing in their solidity and definition. The flickering torch would cast shadows and play on the walls. The feel of the stones in uncertain lighting would aid differentiation.

When experiencing a *cursus* the monument at different times of the day, and year, would always be changing, casting different conditions, flooding, even covered with snow. Sites built in sections like the Cleaven Dyke or Maxey would have had differently coloured stretches each older than the other, perhaps with differing levels of vegetation, a monument of many colours. In fact the *cursus* could be seen as a part of the natural world, growing with it, and changing with it, subject to the seasons and the elements like any other uncovered place.

The colour of such earthwork or timber lined enclosures may only have been a minor part of the experience, or may not have mattered at all. The freshly cut timbers would have smelt, felt and looked new. Glistening water filled ditches may have brought the monument to life, a spectacular if infrequent event. Autumn leaves would blow across the bank and ditches. Yet the colouring of the experience was not all uncontrollable. Sites were built where water could become a part of them. The time of day it was used may have been restricted and the amount of cleaning regulated as well.

There is no evidence to match the gypsum coating Thornborough henge bank received (N Thomas 1955) at any *cursus*. However the transforming nature of the *cursus* experience, sometimes through human intervention sometimes not, may have strengthened the contrasts inherent in these sites. These were places that alluded to transformations, subject to the same growth and decay of the world around them and sometimes looking rather similar, yet often distinct.

### 9.4. Colour biography of the Cleaven Dyke

Before colour television, everything was black and white.



## Interpretations

The place has no really distinctive colour, nothing that comes to mind. It is the colours of all of the world really, and yet none at all, as it is a place, not a thing. The infinite greens and browns of the scraggy trees, the dull scrub and the bright green unkempt grass. Above, the blues and whites of the sky, the clouds casting dark shadows sweeping across the land. Perhaps it is the colour of the past. The place has no really distinctive colour, nothing that comes to mind. It is the colours of all of the world really, and yet none at all, as it is a place, not a thing.

The darkness of night on this flat plateau, broken by bright fires, casting long shadows which touch the trees. The night is black, the moon a muddy, watery grey.

We have started to dig and to gather the earth in this place, digging down and building up, a mound, a small hill, a special hill for a special place. As we cut into the earth, the fresh brown sandy soils look clean (yet dirty of course) and we smell the clean-cut soil. The mound we are building up can be seen from all around this flat place, always against a background of green.

A mound was built once, countless lives ago, and they still build today, creating the old monument anew. It takes many heartbeats for them to walk from the digging places back to the grassy green mound where it all began. They walk methodically from the long holes they are gouging to a fixed central point, carefully placing their soily loads on the long mound that stretches off towards the hill. Where they walk, the grass is trampled brown as they spill dirt from their tools, walking it in, a new surface. What they are focused upon is a remarkably crisp deep yellow mound, looking like it feels, clay and soil. They have built afresh on the old plan, but it is so different, clean unlike the grassy, slightly overgrown work of their ancestors. It is a living thing growing towards these men, growing grass, growing from the earth itself, and turning back to it again.

I visited the place at night. It is all shadow, shades of black, almost invisible. In a few hours, it will be green again.



Walking along the cursus monument in the woods, everything was dull, and this was only occasionally broken by a shaft of light penetrating the dense foliage. It was a confusion of trees, with rough grassy vegetation on the banks and ditches obscured by fallen and cut branches, and scarred by brown bursts of rabbit holes and tree stumps. Crossing the road, the colours of the modern road were evident again, red blurs are cars. The break in the cursus itself filled with black tarmac. Reaching a cleared section, it is uniform green (bank, ditch and between) running up to a wall of brown trunks. The path used by dog walkers is worn and covered in trampled-in leaves and blossoms. At the far south-eastern end, the cursus is gone, ploughed away. The deep brown ploughed field is broken by a yellow-orange streak running across it, a soil mark indicating where the bank once stood.

Digging the Cleaven Dyke. Excavation is all about colour when there are no artefacts to amuse or occupy. The drawing of a section involves the close analysis of the way that the colours and textures change and alternate and relate to each other. Here, a thin band of yellowy sandy soil, and then a more orange deposit, or browns, or pebbles. Differences can be subtle, and so I take a small trowel's point of soil from what I suspects are two similar but different layers, and lay each on my hand, side by side, holding it up to the light, where before I was in the shadow of the bank. This is how we can detect cuts, or different deposits, and can identify in which order that the segments were built. We feel our way into a section, through how it feels against our trowel, through using shadow and light and colour.

From the Cessna 172, I watched from a distance as the distinctive shape of the North Wood came into view. 2000 feet below, it swims into site, two brash streaks of green against a swaying yellow crop background from the forest's edge to the road. The light is poor for photography, hazy and indistinct. The earthwork is not as obvious as the cropmark, more shadow than anything else.





Plate 9.1 (top) Colour and the Cleaven Dyke 1. Walking towards the south-east terminal there are the browns of the plough soil and the stubble crop.

Plate 9.2 (bottom) Colour and the Cleaven Dyke 2. The browns of the excavation section and the green turf cover.



## Interpretations

The artist stood back to look at his finished piece of work, his copious notes and sketches and photographs all around. The reconstruction of the Cleaven Dyke. Three yellow lines run through grazing vegetation, and lush green woodland. Bright white cows. The monument is uniform in colour, all clean, as if freshly built. There are no cows between the ditches, where the grass is muddied and streaked with dust. This is a place that would have been visible for miles, a special bright place in a mundane dull landscape. People are silhouettes.

When the trench was back-filled after the excavation (the re-construction of the Cleaven Dyke), the browns so painstakingly recorded and analysed were obscured and lost from view, and the cursus was re-sculpted, re-turved and green again.

The published excavation photographs are black and white.

This is a brief biography of the Cleaven Dyke (see also plates 9.1 and 9.2) through some perceptions of the colours it has taken on, from how it may have looked to others in the past, through to how it looked to others and myself as we painstakingly took apart the monument and recorded it. The colours have been primarily browns and greens as is to be expected from a monument made of earth left to stand for four or five thousand years. Notice how the colours are always dependent on textures - the scrubby vegetation, the clean fresh soil, and the trampled muddy grass. Notice also the role of light in changing how the place is experienced, from the visit in the night to the hazy view from far above.

Its colours do not define the Cleaven Dyke, nor have they been necessarily the most important property of the monument. They may have, however, instilled the idea of the contrast between the freshly constructed segment and the older vegetation covered mound, capturing the temporality of its construction, merging it into the surrounding landscape and even suggesting antiquity. For me the lights and colours varied as I walked along and the colourful bright sections were



inevitably those associated with ease of walking alongside. The soilmark was a thrilling surprise.

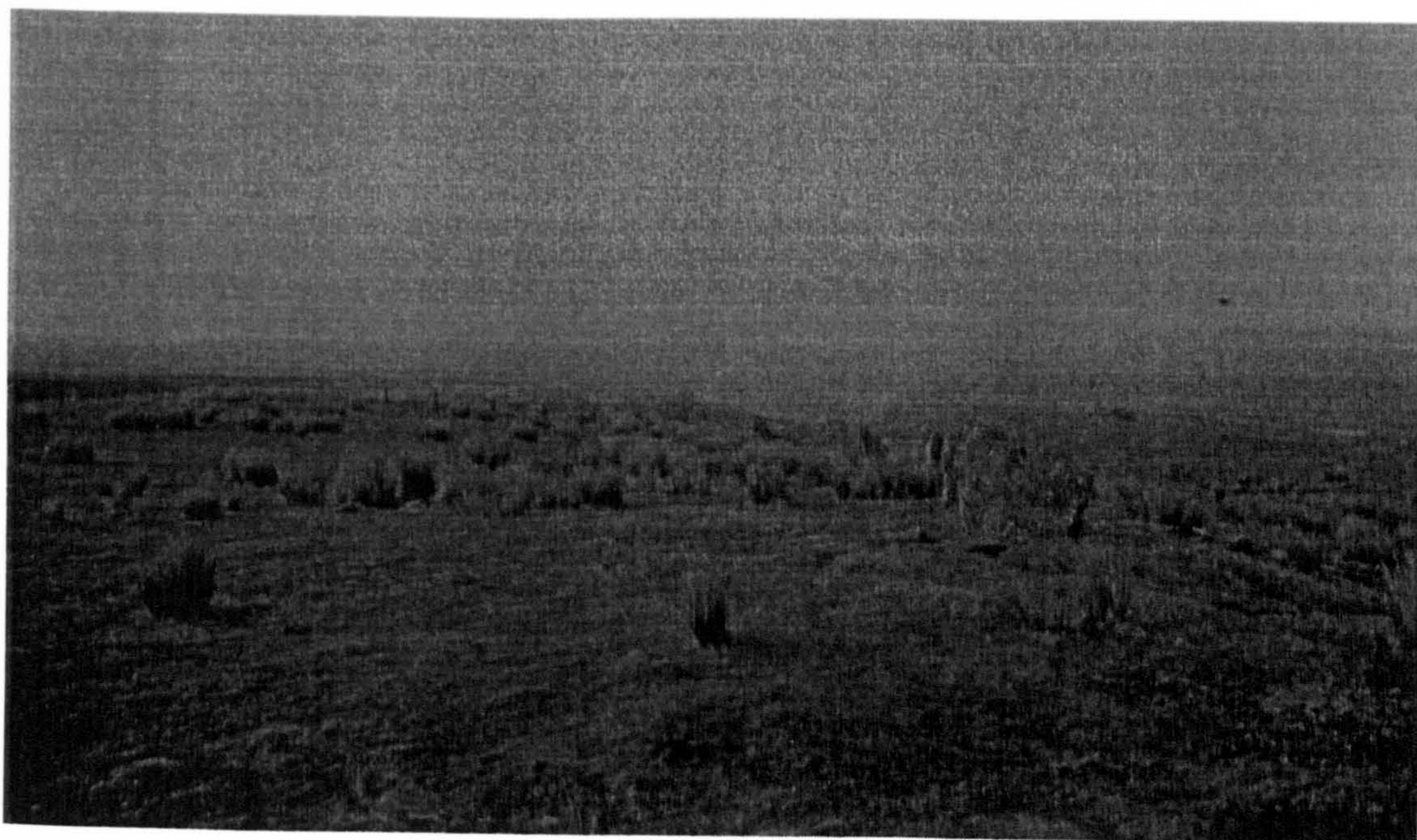
The transformation of the site through its seasonality and through the colours it took on made it a different place (but still the same place) at different times of the year and day. Think of the snow-covered white central mound in deepest winter or the white sparkling crisp frost gathered in the ditches and shadows or the monument obscured by cold fog and colder breath. Think of the ditches clogged up with fallen wet brown leaves or perhaps even flooded after heavy rain. As I have said, colour was an aspect of the being of the monument that through its transformations and changes mimicked the changing world around and reflected the changes in the site itself through time.

### 9.5. Digging holes

When we excavate a site, we are painstakingly reversing the processes of millennia of silting, of decades of ploughing, and of other forms of erosion. We are digging an archaeological feature. But we are also digging again the same pits and post-holes and ditches that were dug so long ago (for completely different reasons of course) to the exact specifications of the original. We can imagine that an overhanging rock, lodged into the natural and jutting out of the side of the feature, was spotted and perhaps frustrated the person who created the feature in the first place. We are reversing the past, removing the post deposits, the packing, the primary fills, reconstructing on paper and in words what was once reality. We are digging the site backwards.

The post-holes at the so-called cursus of Holm (in actual fact, a triple alignment of standing timbers) had what could be described as a life or a history, and history repeated itself. Fowler wrote this of the post-holes at the Neolithic enclosure at Dunragit, and this could easily apply to Holm (and was meant to). “Each post-hole has its own composite biography, involving Neolithic people, the actions of farmers and landusers since later prehistory, and the workers, visitors, organisations, State and landowners...” (1999). Our intervention in this





*Plate 9.3 (top) A half-sectioned post-hole at Holm 1998.  
Plate 9.4 (bottom) Looking along Achavanich stone setting  
towards the 'rounded' terminal.*



## Interpretations

story is to discover (through cropmarks) and to excavate and record. We reconstruct the digging of a pit by digging the same pit all over again, or at least a truncated version of it.

The interim report for Holm includes the description of posthole 045 from the south side of the cursus. "The primary cut 045 had a slightly sloping side and flat base. In dimension 1.00 metre by 1.00 metre. The basal fill (066) seemed to be the remains of the original post packing which had collapsed subsequent to the destruction of the post. Above this was an orange sandy gravel (065) which was most probably a burnt material washed into the primary post void. More direct evidence of burning of this first post is provided by context 058 (sealing 065) - a friable silty clay with a high charcoal content.

Cut 182, the first recut of this posthole, was 0.80 by 0.80 metres. The fill of this posthole (046) was a compact to friable sandy loam with a very high stone content, and most probably packing for a withdrawn second post.

Cut 062 is the tertiary cut of this feature, 0.60 by 0.70 metres. It was filled by a tenacious sandy clay with some charcoal flecks" (Thomas & Leivers 1998, 4).

This is a potted history of the first incarnations of the post-hole, of several acts of post erection, and an equal number of acts of burning down the post. Perhaps it is a cliché to say that here the archaeologist (whoever he or she was who dug this feature) painstakingly took this pit apart, removing the last deposits first, and reaching the first cut last. I like the idea that the pits at Milton of Rattray, with their uniform clay fill may have been filled in one deliberate action only for myself to come along and dig it all out again. Of course, we fill the hole back in again but now with mixed spoil the interior fills partially sampled and mixed in the spoil tip with the fills of other pits.

These pit-defined sites have biographies, of pits cut into virgin earth, perhaps in special places. These pits are never wholly the same again until the excavator



comes along and re-opens them. It is a special feeling to do this, to uncover pit sides long covered by packing and fills. We are just another part of the biography of the site digging and creating and interpreting and looking for meanings.

### 9.6. Microcosms and miniatures

What are we to make of the relationships between cursus monuments, their landscape settings and architectural techniques? Two recent studies have suggested that monuments were metaphors for the wider landscape referencing dominant topographical locales with superficial architectural similarities and appropriating natural features. Essentially they are microcosms of the real thing. Richards (1996), as already discussed, saw henges as such places, metaphors for the outside world and the elements. The interaction of water and henge ditch adds a further layer of intimacy and ambiguity to this particular relationship that goes beyond metaphor. (My earlier discussion in this chapter saw cursus monuments as metaphorical rivers).

Tilley (1999) has suggested that bank barrows in Dorset (which he erroneously states are unique to that area) are metaphors for dominant and unusual features of the chalklands landscape. These include the Dorset ridgeway (a long and high chalkland ridge) and Chesil beach (a long sand spit connecting the beach with Portland Isle). Tilley sees the bank barrows as being metaphorical representations of the ridgeway, “duplicating in miniature” (*ibid.* 205). Furthermore, the ridgeway itself was a representation of the beach, and has even been described as a natural bank barrow or cursus (RCHME 1970). (Again, we have here the mention of bank barrows and cursus in the same breath as if they were one and the same thing functionally). To further extend the cursus / bank barrow / landscape ambiguity, Tilley undertook a phenomenological walk along the ridgeway.

The close links between nature and culture are stressed by Tilley again and again in this study, from the physical similarities (at least of generalised profiles and forms) of monument and locales to the intervisibility of these features across the



landscape. Sinkholes are incorporated into Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments along the ridgeway. He stresses the physical similarities of these places suggesting that “the Chesil beach, bordered by water on both sides, is mirrored by the bank barrow [Maiden Castle] ditches” (Tilley 1999, 204). So the ridgeway was a pre-historic version of the Chesil beach, an ancient beach somehow detached from the sea. Bank barrows reminded people of this and were markers for how this fitted into the builders’ cosmologies.

*Cursus* monuments in Scotland may well have resembled features of the wider world but because of the very poor levels of survival we are restricted to similarities in plan, not shape. The only two survivors - the bank barrow-like Cleaven Dyke and Eskdalemuir - both provide glimpses of mimicry of surrounding features. It could be suggested, for instance, that the massive ‘barrow’ and long bank at the topographically flat north-west end of the Dyke is a forerunner to the rather more ambiguous south-east end where the mound and ditches seamlessly merged with a topographical terminal. The Tom’s Knowe terminal looks like a natural mound and Lamb Knowe seems to be a direct copy of topographical spurs and knolls on the same hillside.

The difference between Scotland’s examples and those suggested by Tilley or Richards are that these are actual size, not merely smaller versions of the real thing.

### 9.7. Using topography

The drawing of topographical variations and features into the monumentality of some of these sites suggests that these were both exploited by the *cursus* users but also in some way controlled the location of the *cursus*. Merleau-Ponty would have suggested that this again shows the non-determinant nature of the world, where the body is not merely another object and the mind is not all creating. In this case, the landscape is not merely a vast green lump of plasticene to be moulded as people need. The builders were drawn to use these places. However, they were integral parts of the experience with ambiguous origins (Bradley



1998b) and open to interpretation. The cursus sites show a fusion of objectivity and subjectivity, nature and culture, and show the ambiguity of life.

The location of *cursus* sites with dominant terminals, on subtly changing topography, running across plateaus and aligning on rivers may have heightened the ritual significance of such sites. They may have added power to particular points of an experience, or facilitated some degree of symbolism, exclusion and / or control. There may have been surprises at some points in ritual walks. These monuments may have, through their sheer size, appropriated many aspects of the life of a society including important places from the past. *Cursus* monuments were almost certainly not all the same and I will argue in the next chapter that this typological grouping ignores concerns with things like the landscape which were shared by many Neolithic sites. The landscape certainly seems to have been significant and may well have helped shape the meaning and interpretations of many Neolithic places.

### 9.8. Some thoughts about stone rows and fans

The linear monuments of Scotland's prehistory include a rather eclectic range of stone settings in the north-east corner of the Scottish mainland, in Caithness and Sutherland. These take the form of fans, parallel rows, and even horseshoe settings of squat standing stones, often now barely protruding above the surface of thick peat. They are located in small hollows and valleys, on hillsides, and on hilltops. Their study has been dominated by the mathematically precise grids imposed on the site plans by Thom (1971) and Myatt (1989) who saw them as guides for observing and recording the complicated cycles of the moon. The alignment on notches and hilltops on which much of this depends is stressed time and time again. Yet I think that little consideration has been given to the monuments themselves.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of these complexes of stones is the small size of the stones themselves, which is exacerbated by the ever-increasing peat cover. Occasionally new settings are discovered after a fire in the heather (G Watson



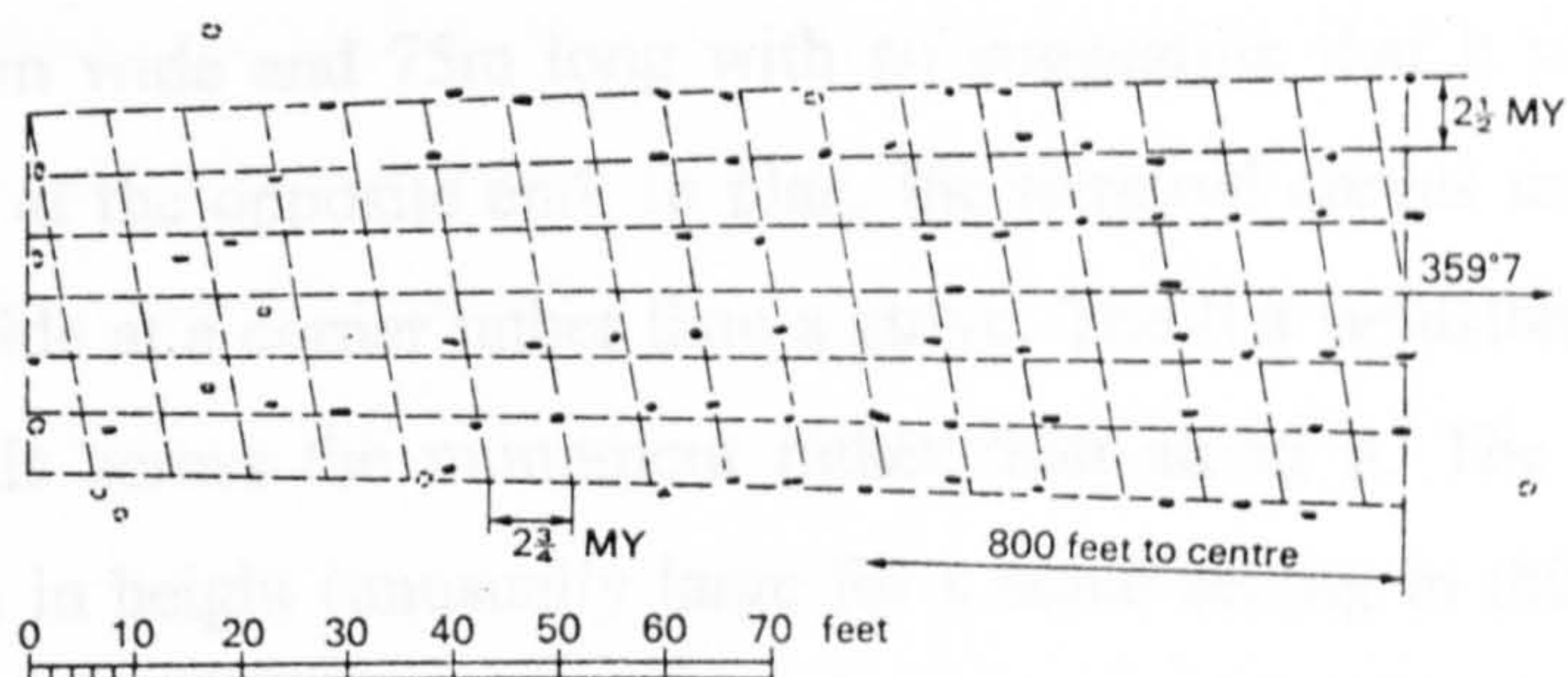
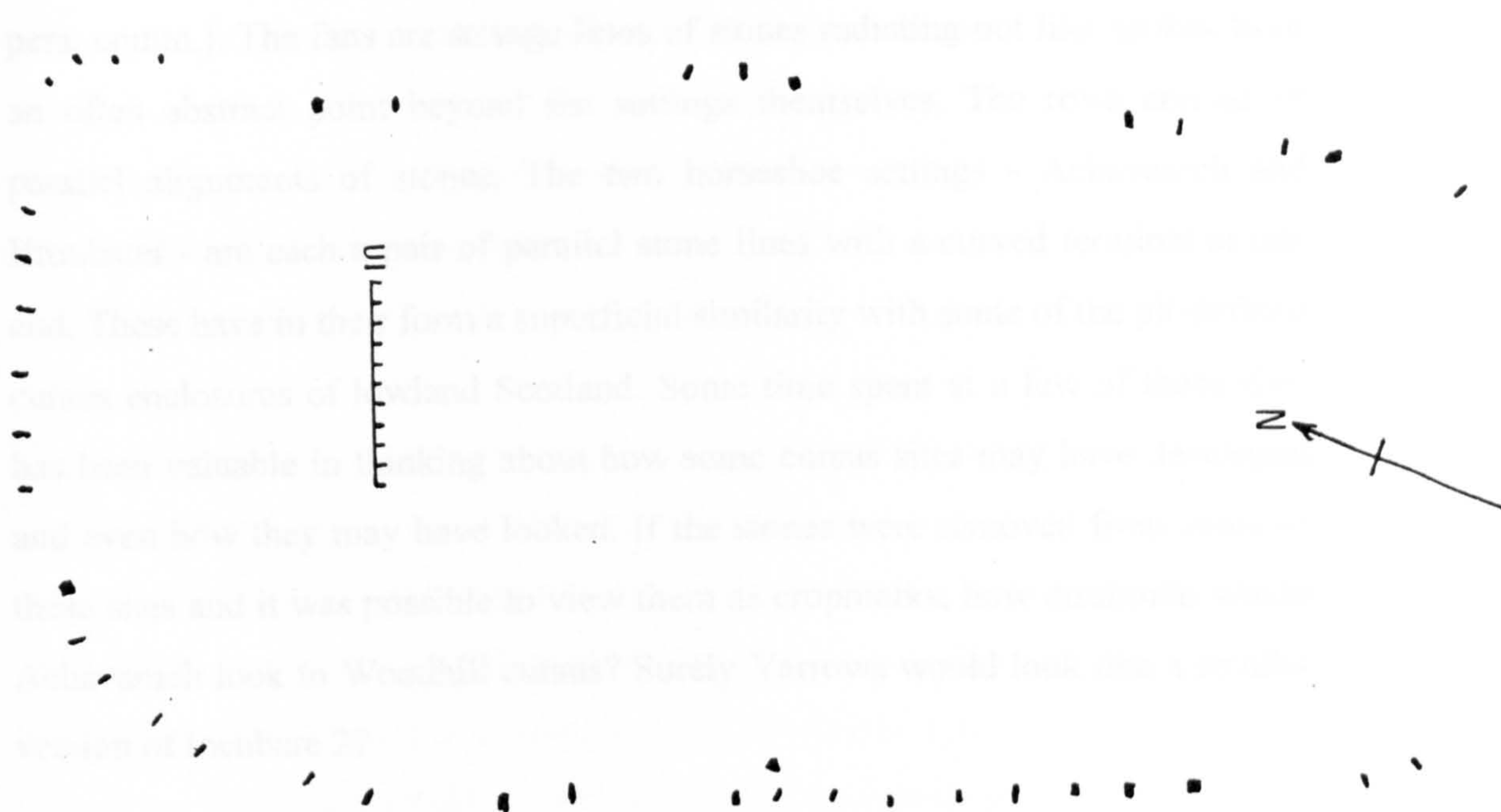


Figure 9.2 (top) Plan of Achavanich stone setting (from Bramman et al 1982, pg.13).

Figure 9.3 (bottom) Plan of Yarrows stone rows with an lunar grid superimposed (from Thom 1971, fig.9.7).



pers. comm.). The fans are strange lines of stones radiating out like spokes from an often abstract point beyond the settings themselves. The rows consist of parallel alignments of stones. The two horseshoe settings - Achavanich and Broubster - are each a pair of parallel stone lines with a curved terminal at one end. These have in their form a superficial similarity with some of the pit-defined cursus enclosures of lowland Scotland. Some time spent at a few of these sites has been valuable in thinking about how some cursus sites may have developed and even how they may have looked. If the stones were removed from some of these sites and it was possible to view them as cropmarks, how dissimilar would Achavanich look to Woodhill cursus? Surely Yarrows would look like a smaller version of Inchbare 2?

Achavanich (or Achkinloch) is a remarkable monument and a special place, sitting on a plateau overlooking the Loch of Stemster in Caithness (fig. 9.3, plate 9.4). It is situated in a lonely, desolate location, windswept and peaceful. The silence is occasionally broken by cars passing along the modern road which abuts up against one side of the 'enclosure'. It now consists of over thirty stones (spacing suggests it originally consisted of fifty-four) set in two parallel lines with a 'curved' terminal at the NNW end (RCAHMS 1911; Bramman et al 1982). It is about 40m wide and 75m long with no suggestion that it was any longer or was closed at the opposite end. In plan, the terminal curves unevenly meeting the eastern side at a corner rather than a curve. The flat sandstone slabs are set with long axis across the monument rather than along it. The largest stones are almost 2m in height (unusually large for a stone setting in this area). Cope (1998) describes this site as the Great U of Stemster.

On the ground, it is difficult to appreciate the shape of this site as well illustrated by the fantastic photograph in the RCAHMS inventory (1911) where the stones appear to define a huge circle, an optical illusion. Approaching it from along the long axis however, the shape is much more obvious but the individual participant (the lone archaeologist) seems lost within the large internal area. To the left the built up bank from the road swamps the stones but to the right they clearly define



## Interpretations

the edge of the plateau, almost falling off into the stream below. Approaching the terminal area a stunning view of the Loch itself envelopes one and dominates the view ahead, even if off-set slightly to the right. It terminates on the edge of this plateau that effectively is a promontory. Looking back along this short walk, the horizon is low and unimpressive with no clear focus.

This is an amazing experience, walking along a linear monument with a porous boundary, a site which in plan has many similarities to many pit-defined cursus sites. The landscape here seems important with the focus on the terminal area and the view over the loch. The barren stones stick out of the patchy grass which transforms to reeds almost as soon as the plateau falls away towards the water. This is not a cursus monument, and may well have its origins in the Bronze Age, but it is as close as we are going to get to a walk along a post-defined cursus. Perhaps they did have similar functions and meanings or were nothing like one another at all.

Yarrows parallel stone rows run along the edge of Yarrows Loch at the fringes of an archaeologically important landscape. Tombs and standing stones break the horizons in several directions and the location at the Lochside seems to be centrally placed with hills on all sides. Again there is a confusion of low stones all under knee height which take on no clear pattern unless looking along the rows. Approach from the side and it seems to be a collection of boulders and slabs scattered across a field barely visible above the grass and gorse (fig. 9.3).

There is a value in these visits to superficially different site types such as these. It highlights the importance of approaching these sites from the correct direction to even begin to understand them and their form. Many of these megalithic monuments are meaningless and have no pattern unless approached from a certain direction. They then transform from a natural scatter to an artificial order. Imagine if Inchbare stood as a series of two to six parallel lines of standing timbers. Approached from the side this would be utterly confusing with no clear order. The triple line of posts at Holm would again have been difficult to identify



## Interpretations

as anything others than a forest of timbers if encountered from the sides. There may have been certain ways of moving in the landscape outwith the monument boundaries.

To actually stand within a visible prehistorically defined space such as Achavanich rather than merely estimating and imagining the location of boundaries illustrates how insignificant one person is in such a large space. Even a small group of people would be lost. Places like Broich (about 100m wide) and Monktonhall (up to 170m wide) are exaggerated avenues and unnecessarily wide to walk along. It is difficult to imagine how these places constrained people to the purely linear movement that archaeologists often attribute to these places. Dorset cursus, viewed by Tilley as a linear pathway for novices, is up to 120m wide in places. Whilst many henge monuments seem to have been added to internally to further control movement and access (Durrington Walls and Avebury to name two notable examples) there is little evidence for this in cursus monuments. Perhaps we have to think more of these being places within which movement along them was encouraged by a focal point at one end rather than the physical constraints of the boundaries. This could be a topographical or architectural feature at a terminal, both themes stressed in the previous two chapters.

Walking along Achavanich reveals the porosity of the boundaries of such places. Whereas a ditch-defined site like Drybridge or Drylawhill-Preston Mains would have restricted views primarily ahead, the post-defined sites would not have had this level of control. The world can be hidden behind a bank 2m high but not by posts 4 or 5m apart. We could argue then that whilst ditch-defined sites encouraged visibility and movement within the confines of the earthworks, so post-defined sites did not offer these physical constraints. There is of course the possibility that some of these sites were fenced in maintaining the control of visibility to the outside world. One form of architecture looks outwards and encourages spectators, the other is isolated and surrounded by mystery.



The stone fans echo in plan the post and pit settings at Holm, which seem to radiate outwards from one or two set points. Holm changed and developed over time with new alignments constructed upon and cut features adding to the confused discrete settings. These superficially bewildering places with lines cutting across the same discreet areas have dis-similarities as well. The post-lines at Holm would not have had the permanence of the short megaliths at, say, The Hill O' Many Staines. Instead they were burnt down and newly erected timbers were added. Later the form of alignment changed from posts to pits. It probably did not look like a fan at any time. However these sites are both places of cutting and erection and a concern for marking certain alignments. They are superficially confusing and yet obviously planned. Just as Holm was continually embellished, changed and renewed, so I like to think of the stone fans as being places where again and again new rows were added or standing rows were lengthened. These are places that seem to point beyond themselves (but not necessarily towards the moon).

### 9.8. Doing their own thing

More than anything the sites that are recounted in this thesis are examples of people *doing their own thing* with a basic rectangular shape. There are some enclosures that impress by their sheer scale. Monktonhall is almost impossible to imagine hundreds of metres long and very wide with perhaps three or four earthwork banks and adjacent ditches along all sides. The pit-defined site at Milton of Guthrie consisted presumably of two parallel lines of perhaps hundreds of standing timbers. The Cleaven Dyke and Eskdalemuir suggest a great degree of effort and will was invested in their construction and possibly maintenance over an unknown period of time. At the other end of the scale are smaller places, like Douglasmuir and Bennybeg, or narrow enclosures, at Kilmany and Blairbeth.

Yet these sites should not be used primarily to define our typological groups by being the arbitrary limits of such groups. There is no real point in discussing the longest *cursus* monument in Scotland or even the average length (Topping 1982).



The size of these sites should not be used as an indicator of their importance or the importance of the social group that constructed it. Instead we should realise that these places were built as they were to serve the specific purposes of the builders. If they felt that they needed a relatively small enclosure then that is what they would have built. Nobody constructs The Cleaven Dyke for the sake of it and by the same token those who erected the timbers at Douglasmuir were obviously capable of building a far bigger enclosure if they really wanted to.

There seems little doubt that social groups in the Neolithic did not live in isolation from the external world. It may well be that they shared ideas about building monuments and enclosures and I will argue briefly in the following chapter that there are a few loose regional styles of cursus that can be identified in Scotland. However, what people did with a basic idea of a rectangular enclosure was up to them to decide and needed to serve their specific needs. The deposits made, the frequency of cleaning or post replacement, the nature of the boundaries, the shapes of the terminals, the exploitation of the local topography and many other variables were their own choices and helped to fulfil ideas of what their society was and wanted to be.

Embellishments and changes were something that may have occurred at many of these sites but they were variations specific to those sites. Many of the interpretations discussed in this chapter (some of which are more meaningful to the present day than the Neolithic) reflect the varying character of these sites which are lazily classed as the same monument by our modern typologies. Meanings were flexible and not always fixed. Perhaps the cursus at Broich was initially constructed as a response to a particularly bad flood of the Earn. Three hundred years later it was a burial processional way before the body was deposited in the river below. This enclosed space may have contrasted with the timber enclosure at Bennybeg across the water where people looked in on the rituals or participated, in the forecourt horns. One day it was set alight and burnt to the ground.



## Interpretations

These were special places and different places. People may have moved within them or not been allowed to move within them. They may have meant different things to different generations each of whom added their own meaning just as we do today. What did the builders of the second last segment of the Cleaven Dyke think about the ancient monument that they were adding to? Was it really what those who added the second segment, or the fifteenth segment thought?

This chapter has been intended as a kind of synthesis of the three that have preceded it, bringing together my experiences of the sites and observations to start to interpret some of these places. They are not all the same as their shared type would suggest. Rather they reflect a combination of needs and concerns, of a merging of the cultural and natural, and involve transformations. These are not defining characteristics of cursus monuments however and I will now go on to think about the wider monumentality of the Neolithic and what these observations tell us about how we classify the past.



**PART 4. PHENOMENOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
PRACTICE**



## 10. How we 'do' archaeology

### 10.1 Tensions

In this thesis, I have spent a lot of time offering critiques of traditional archaeological methodologies, or ways of doing things. One of my major arguments has been against the misleading, unreflective nature of typology, which shares the facade of objectivity in excavation and excavation reports. Typology and excavation are two of the pillars of archaeological discourse and endeavour, and both reinforce and feed off one another. Our excavations are shaped by the type of site we are meant to be digging, and the results help to further define that site type, sometimes even help to define a new sub-type.

What I want to do here is to start to think is not about how we could do archaeology, but about how we could do a more theoretically informed archaeology. Yet it is very difficult to escape the prevailing, ingrained ideas of a discipline. These standard methods and techniques are riddled with contradictions. For instance, the so-called *cursus* sites that I have discussed at some length are a group which is to an extent defined by the typological label 'cursus'. In reality the study group has its boundaries only at the subjective limits of what the cursus type should, or should not, include. In effect this means that sites are not called cursus because they somehow conform to an idealised type definition, but rather from a personal interpretation of this definition and of the site.

How many would define Fourmerkland or Douglassmuir as what is widely regarded as a cursus, without seeing the context from within such interpretations become possible and understandable? (They surely would not have been defined as such in England). How many would even include the Cleaven Dyke, a reasonable interpretation given more credence by the excavated Scorton cursus (Topping 1982)? Furthermore, the interweaving of typology and excavation is shown through the excavations of several of Scotland's sites. The results of these digs has lead to 'type ambiguity'. Sites such as Douglassmuir (Kendrick 1995) or



Bannockburn (Rideout 1997) have only tentatively been linked with a cursus tradition. Upper Largie (Terry 1997, 1998) and Fox Plantation (MacGregor *et al* 1996) were unexpected discoveries made through rescue excavations. Both have been positively linked to such a tradition in order to explain certain features within archaeological complexes. Milton of Rattray (Baines *et al* forthcoming) and Holm (Thomas 1998; Thomas & Leivers 1998) have to an extent both been distanced from their initial interpretation of cursus sites after excavation. Excavators at both sites shared the same concern with the inadequacy of the type itself. So it is that excavation validates our monument labels, but also can subtly alter them.

The tensions in my work in chapters 7 to 9 are obvious. The results of excavations at many of these sites - Douglasmuir to Monktonhall, Upper Largie to Fox Plantation - are used freely in the discussions of 'architectural themes' (chapter 8), and yet the excavations employ methodologies and publication standards which are hardly post-processual. Consider especially the empirical excerpt from an interim report on the Milton of Rattray excavations (section 10.3.1. below).

These are the tensions that I referred to in the introduction, highlighted by Shanks in his largely metaphorical analysis of the discipline (1992). There is a clear contradiction between my yearning to think afresh and act afresh as an archaeologist, and yet I still cannot shake off the vocabulary or methodology of the past. It is here that we can turn to Merleau-Ponty, because he would not abandon objectivity, the traditional (scientific) way of doing things, but rather, think about what it still has to offer a more (but not wholly) interpretative approach. To this end, I will think about a different way of presenting the results of Milton of Rattray, via a look at the polar opposite of the empirical account, Hodder's reflexive methodology (1997, 1999). Firstly, though, I will think about how we can escape from the typologies that trap us.



## 10.2 Typology

A detailed critique of archaeological typology has been set out already in the second chapter, a context for the inclusion of the sites described in both chapter 3 and the gazetteer, and there is no need to go over everything again here. Suffice to say that typologies are a kind of straight-jacket for the archaeologist, encouraging laziness in interpretations, and stifling thought about what sites may have meant (stressing similarity over difference). They ignore the temporality of monuments (pre-monument, embellishments and alterations, re-use and so on) and are applied without any real thought about either what the labels say about the past, or even what they say about us as archaeologists.

This thesis has necessarily concentrated on a group of sites which could be loosely described as rectangular enclosures, but which have become CURSUS MONUMENTS, an archaeological type. This is not merely a morphological grouping, but a more loaded categorisation, with implied function, date, and form. However, rather than try to clarify the classification, tighten the definition, or conclude with what a Scottish *cursus* monument was, I hope that I have begun to show the redundancy of the term through the very sites which it endeavours to describe. In fact, the sites are all different, products of people *doing their own thing* with a basic enclosure shape (not, in my opinion, a justification to type them as we have been doing).

The ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ themes laid out in chapters 7 and 8 are not defining characteristics of cursus monuments, nor has it ever been my intention to suggest this. The building techniques, the actions of the people, the relationships with hills, rivers and places are all displayed in some of the sites, at some stage in their history, but this is certainly not what makes any of them a cursus monument. What I want to suggest here is that there are themes of Neolithic life which transcend the artificial, modern typologies which we impose on monuments, themes which may be more indicative of Neolithic life than a monument type. On what level these ‘themes’ work is unclear, and I will return to discuss this later, alongside the dangers of this idea or its misinterpretation.



A good example of what I am trying to say can be found in Richards' ideas about the architectural similarities between monuments and houses in Neolithic Orkney. He has argued that the places like the Stones of Stenness, Maes Howe, and Skara Brae and Barnhouse (a stone circle, chambered cairn and houses) had a shared basic ground plan based around the entrance and the symmetry of central spaces. He notes the cruciform layout of house and floor plans at Skara Brae and Barnhouse, with points radiating out from the central hearth, and there are similarities in the positioning of 'beds' and 'dressers', and their relative size. This is linked more widely to the cardinal points and important solstices, and comparison is drawn with the floor plan at Maes Howe and the square structure within the Stones of Stenness (Richards 1990, 1991; Barclay 1996).

Yet this shared floor plan is not the defining characteristic of any of these sites types. Instead, the floor plan, and what it represents, cuts across the boundaries of our typologies, and indeed cuts across our social categories of ritual (stone circle), mortuary (chambered cairn) and domestic (houses). This is not associated with some sacred, remote place. On the very localised level of the Stenness peninsula there is a reference to a cosmology which rises above everyday mundane tasks and yet is referenced in the structures inhabited in daily life (Richards 1993). So, in the same way, segmented construction of monuments, or embellishments, do not mean that a site is a cursus (nor does linearity), but instead points to wider aspects of Neolithic society.

In the introductory chapter, I discussed the series of volumes spawned by attempts to describe as fully as possible a monument type. I hope that my research differs intrinsically from these previous efforts, which sought to clarify and collect, because I am starting with a group of monuments which were thought to be unitary and trying to break it down. Nevertheless, these books and theses are excellent sources of these transcendent themes, which appear to be found across monuments of the Neolithic. Clare (1986) describes a series of recurring practices at henges and these cut across his rigid groupings. In



particular, I will look at henge monuments, causewayed enclosures and burial monuments. I will also look more closely at some of the themes which I introduced earlier and think about how they manifest themselves at other monument types.

### 10.2.1. Relationships with water

I have already thought about the relationship between cursus sites and rivers and water in previous chapters. A monument near to water, or even waterlogged, is not necessarily a cursus monument, however. The close relationship between water and henge monuments has been noted several times in the past, occasionally through anecdotal or incidental evidence. AC Thomas (1955) discusses the folklore attached to the Thornborough henges and other henge monuments. He mentions a local myth / story involving the central henge, a story which tells of Roman (or in some versions, Saxon) activity within the henge. A 'joust' of some kind took place, with two opponents on horseback charging towards one another, to duel in the centre, *via* the opposing henge causeways. "Cheering spectators had thronged the banks, isolated from the combatants by the inner ditch, which was filled with water" (*ibid.* 443). Equally interesting is the depiction of Craigie Burn, a probable henge in Lanarkshire, on the first edition of the OS 6-inch map, as being internally flooded, and used as a curling pond, or J. Thomas' (pers. comm.) suggestion that the Pict's Knowe henge, Dumfriesshire, was surrounded by water at some points and could only be reached by boat. Modern aerial photographs of this monument have captured the ditch full of water.

Harding and Lee note the close proximity of many henge monuments to rivers. "The low-lying positions mean in the great majority of cases that rivers or streams lie not far away" (1987, 31). They make this observation merely as that, an observation, and stress that whilst this may relate the sites to water related rituals, it may also just be an incidental reflection on the location of the sites. Certainly, there are convincing examples of avenues relating to henges leading towards water (The Avenue at Stonehenge), or sites partially bounded by water

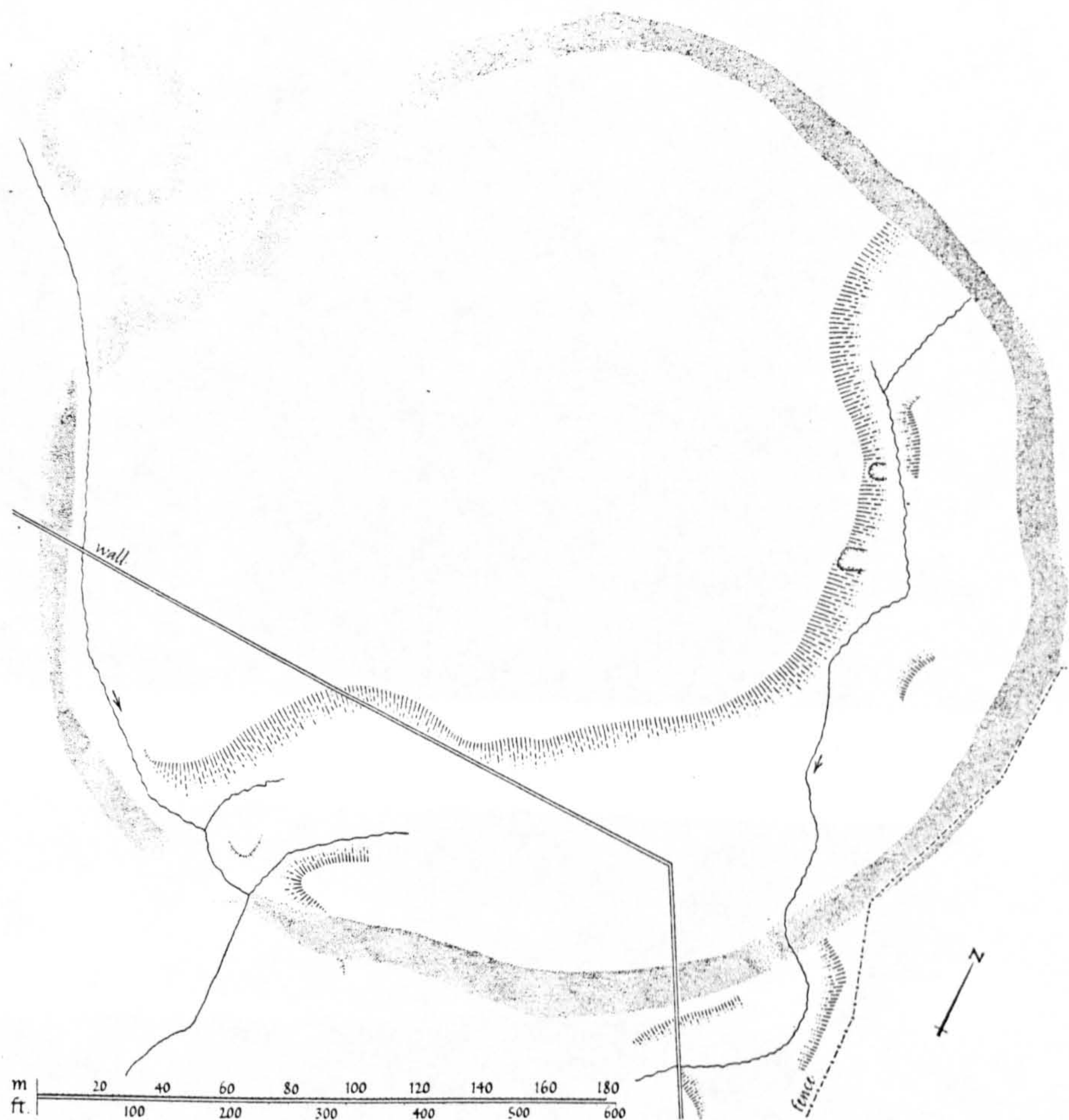


on one side (Marden, Wiltshire, or the palisaded enclosure at Meldon Bridge). A large, possible Neolithic circular ritual enclosure at Blackhouse Burn, Lanarkshire, has at least two separate streams passing through its entrances (RCAHMS 1978b).

I have already discussed Richards' (1996) suggestion that henge monuments would have had flooded ditches, which were metaphors for the water in the surrounding landscape. The ambiguity of natural places and artificially defined ones which such metaphors capture is not exclusive to the Neolithic. Mercer (1981) had suggested that the ditch of Balfarg henge, near Glenrothes, was not dug for the full circuit. Instead, a natural gully was exploited as part of the boundary for some 60m. This flooded over one winter during the excavations, and it probably did the same in prehistory. Later re-evaluation, and re-excavation, suggested in fact that there was an artificial ditch, within a natural gully and this was adjacent to a second entrance (Mercer *et al* 1988). (Interestingly, this causes some confusion with the typology of this henge, as the entrances are not opposed, but rather both in the western half of the enclosure. Mercer tries to fit it into the class I tradition, partly through grooved ware associations).

This seasonal or weather related effect may also have been apparent not only in cursus monuments, but causewayed enclosures. Pryor & Kinnes (1982) discuss the location of the Etton causewayed enclosure, Cambridgeshire, which would have been periodically, perhaps seasonally, waterlogged, a feature it almost certainly shares with the overlapping Maxey cursus (Pryor 1988). Abingdon exploited a river as one of its boundaries (Avery 1982) and Eton Wick causewayed enclosure lies within 200m of the Thames, and is bounded on the west side by a tributary stream (Ford 1986). At Crofton, a stream passes through the interior area of the enclosure there (Palmer 1976). A palisaded enclosure discovered through aerial photography at West Kennet (Whittle & Smith 1990) is bisected by the River Kennet.

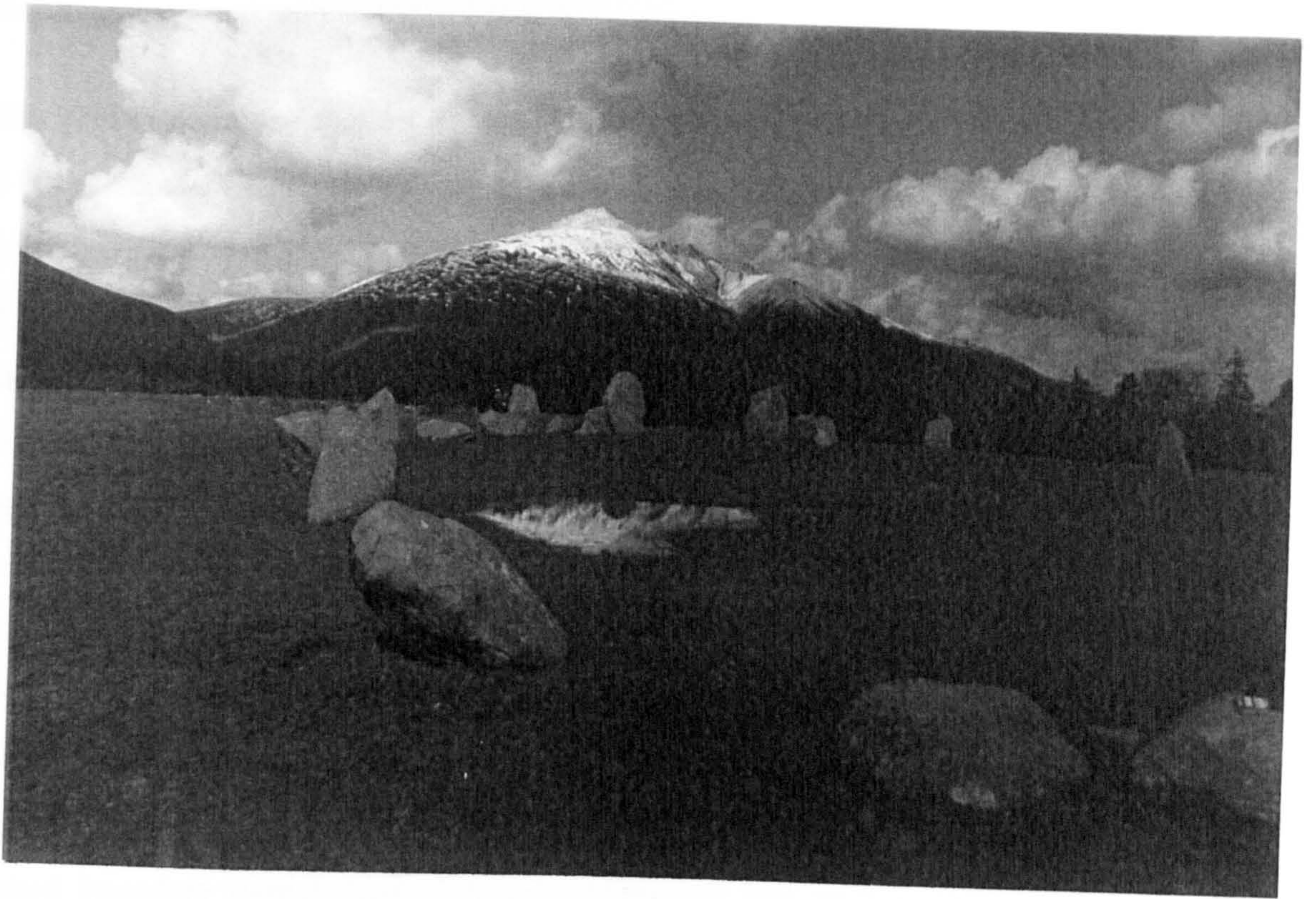




Ritual enclosure (probable), Blackhouse Burn (No. 171; scale 1:2000)

Figure 10.1 Blackhouse Burn. This 'ritual' enclosure now has several streams passing through it, and is obviously a wet place. There is a distinct topographical variation within the enclosure, suggesting there are two levels internally (from RCAHMS 1978b, fig.33).





Plates 10.1 and 10.2 Castlerigg stone circle. Waterlogged and reflective.



Tolan (1988) mentions that all known timber circle cropmark sites in Scotland are either adjacent to rivers, or overlooking rivers. Although this cropmark site type disguises a variety of constructions and periods (from free-standing timber circles to round-houses), this includes another group of Neolithic sites which are situated close to water. Similar observations have been made for stone circles and even cup and ring marked stones. (Fowler (in Brophy and Fowler 1999) has noted the effect of glistening water captured in the grooves after rain).

### 10.2.2. Segmented construction

The segmented construction of monuments, and especially in the digging of ditches, is apparent at many excavated sites. The so-called long mortuary enclosure within Inchtuthil Roman Fort, near the Cleaven Dyke, has an irregular ditched boundary (which held a fence), displaying just such a constructional technique. “The ditch appeared to be made up of segments, most of which were interlinked” (Barclay & Maxwell 1991, 32). Incidentally, there is a marked kink in the ditch at the south-west corner of the enclosure, reminiscent of *cursus* terminal variations discussed in chapter 8.

Clare (1986) identifies, as one of the recurrent features or practices of henge monuments, the characteristic of segmented ditches, or even of digging a series of adjoining pits which, through accident or design, took on the appearance of ditches. He suggests that this may represent the work of ‘different gangs’ of excavators, and gives examples ranging from Ffynnon Newydd to Milfield South. Recently excavated sites have also displayed this phenomenon including Thornborough south (Harding 1998), and the Pict’s Knowe (Thomas 1998). Harding notes of Thornborough that, “a series of aerial photographs illustrate its irregularity and segmentary outline” and excavation showed that the outer ditch had probably been dug in a series of segments of different size and shape (1998, 29). These effects are not found at all henge monuments. Barclay (1983) makes a point of mentioning that there was no evidence for segmentation of the ditch at North Mains 1 henge, Strathallan. (The interior timber enclosure divided the central area into ‘segments’ (Barclay 1998, 55).



Causewayed enclosures are, by their very nature, segmented, although in a different sort of way from the sites already discussed. Unlike henges and cursus sites this is a defining characteristic of this monument type.

### **10.2.3. Relationships with places**

The involvement of places around the landscape in the construction of monuments has been recognised for many prehistoric sites other than cursus monuments. These relationships can, as with cursus monuments, include the alignment of monuments on places, the incorporation of natural features into monumental architecture, even the mimicry of the surrounding landscape. Examples of such monumental incorporation of natural features, and mimicry, are discussed in section 7.4.

There are a few further notable Scottish examples. Alignments on natural places are found at types ranging from long barrows to ‘palisaded enclosures’, and from henges to recumbent stone circles. The long barrow at Herald Hill, for instance, aligns on the knoll which the Cleaven Dyke terminates on, a location which we can suppose was a special place even before the Dyke ran fully up to it (Barclay & Maxwell 1997, 1998). Two of the unusual huge pit-defined enclosures found in Scotland also refer to the wider landscape, with the avenue of Meldon Bridge pointing towards Cademuir Hill (Burgess 1976), and at Dunragit, the avenue aligns directly on a nearby mound, interpreted as a Mote. This may have been added to a natural mound.

Many of the recumbent stone circles are related to the landscape through the framing of the landscape, or hills by the recumbent setting itself, as is the case at Tomnaverie (R. Bradley pers. comm.), or for viewing the moon (Armit 1998). The recumbent itself, it has been suggested, is an architectural copy of a natural tor on top of Mither Tap, a hill in central Aberdeenshire (G. MacGregor pers. comm.).



#### 10.2.4. Embellishments

The continual usage of the same place and of the embellishment of features is very common across many prehistoric sites, far too common to do any justice here. In Scotland alone, there are memorable sequences of embellishments and re-shaping at North Mains, Strathallan (Barclay 1983), Balfarg (Mercer 1981) and Balfarg Riding School (Barclay & Russell-White 1991). At Inchtuthil, there were at least two fences constructed, one of which was burnt down (Barclay & Maxwell 1993). At the Pict's Knowe there was substantial evidence for pre-henge activity (Thomas 1998a). Posts were possibly removed from the complicated sequence of phasing at Dunragit (Thomas, Fowler & Leivers 1999). Timber circles preceded stone circles at Machrie Moor (Haggarty 1991) and Temple Wood (Scott 1988/89) amongst others. Skara Brae went through several phases of re-building (Clarke & Sharples 1985).

#### 10.2.5 Colour

Another of the recurring features of henge monuments, according to Clare (1986), is the discovery of white materials during excavations. This took the form of quartz, sand, gypsum, chalk or limestone. Some chalkland henges would inevitably have a white appearance when freshly constructed or newly cleaned, whilst at other sites the effect was artificially created or enhanced with gypsum coatings on the bank (Thornborough) or deposits of white sand or quartz.

The stone circles at Machrie Moor are conspicuously coloured either red (sandstone) or white (granite), reflected further in the shapes of the stones themselves. The sandstone blocks are towering megaliths, whilst the granite stones are short and squat. Circles 1 and 11 are combinations of the two stone types. At the former six stones were granite, five sandstone, and they were set out in an alternating pattern (Haggerty 1991). As already discussed, Jones (1997) has also suggested that the same combination of stone types at chambered cairns on the island had a symbolic meaning related to the properties and sources of the red and white stones.



A similar colour dichotomy has been noticed at the cairns at Balnuaran of Clava, Inverness-shire (Jones & Bradley 1999).

#### 10.2.6. Neolithic themes

This has been a very sketchy coverage of Neolithic and a few Bronze Age sites, to try to illustrate that the characteristics which seem to be common to many of the sites we call cursus monuments. These are all attempts by people to reconcile the world around them, one full of paradoxes and changes, fluidity and cycles. Cursus sites were not merely special bound off and isolated places, separated from supposed domesticity or funerary activities, but instead refer to the wider world and well-being of society. They may well have helped to define the identity of particular societies (Thomas 1998b). But then we could say the same about henges, timber circles, and houses.

I am not reinforcing any of these typological classes, but rather, attempting to replace such meaningless morphological terms (which carry so much baggage) with the concept that these monuments and places reflect, running across a series of what we term site types, wider concerns of those who built and used them. I have up until now referred to these concerns rather vaguely as themes, but perhaps we should take this a bit further.

What must be considered is at what scale this works on in terms of human relationships. We have several recent arguments to relate these themes to. Did they work only on a 'local' level, like Richards' (1993) idea of cosmological representation in Orkney architecture; a regional level as perhaps would be suggested by Barclay (1995, 1997); or across the Neolithic as a whole - the 'structuring principles' of Parker Pearson (forthcoming) or 'dominant meanings' of Kirk (forthcoming).

*Local scale.* Richards' (1993) ideas of Orkney cosmology laid bare in the floor plans of monuments and houses works in Orkney alone, partially because of the superb quality of the remains left to us (in terms of both level of survival and



concentration). It could, I suppose, be seen as a regional cosmology, as Orkney is a geographically distinct region. In a later paper, Richards', as we have already seen, discussed the relationship between landscape and henges, with particular relevance to Brodgar and Stenness (1996). This cosmology (or more correctly, this metaphor) has a much wider geographical reach, with examples drawn from mainland Scotland and northern England. This could be interpreted as a multi-layered view of the Neolithic, where some ideas are restricted to local communities and shared amongst them, whilst others are more pervasive and have a wider geographical appeal. This need not be contradictory, but may instead be a fair reflection of societies *doing their own thing* as I suggested in the previous chapter.

We may instead choose to think of a local level as a small discrete area, even one social grouping, although there is no evidence to suggest that these themes work on such a small scale. Much of Richards' initial work took place within the Stenness peninsula area of Mainland Orkney.

*Regional level.* There have been several attempts to write about a regional Neolithic in Scotland in recent years. The fact that Neolithic Scotland as a concept is a misnomer (referring to a modern political boundary) as well as misleading (it was not a uniform Neolithic) was not lost on Kinnes (1985). Aspects of this regionality have been expressed through material culture (for instance carved stone balls) and monuments. The distribution of recumbent stone circles relative to henge monuments is seen as an indication of a regional tradition in north-east Scotland (Barclay 1997, 1998), and monuments such as four-posters (Burl 1988) and stone rows also have either discrete distributions or concentrations. The distinctive adoption of a farming economy in the Western Isles has also been postulated (Armit and Finlayson 1992).

Sharples (1992) investigated a series of apparently regional developments of settlement and monument traditions across Scotland and suggested that from a



common 'Neolithic' origin, each area developed differently according to the local environment and particular social histories.

In the group of monuments this research is focused on, certain regional trends can be recognised. The majority of Douglassmuir-like enclosures (all longer versions) are found in Angus, with rare exceptions discovered elsewhere which are often of an apparently different character. The sites known in south-east Scotland, especially East Lothian, are all wide ditch-defined sites, and the Perthshire sites are also primarily ditch-defined (except Milton of Rattray and Bennybeg). The cropmarks identified in south-west Scotland seem to share no clear form, with a wide variety of shapes and sizes represented. There are also areas of Scotland where these monuments are conspicuous by their absence - Berwickshire and most of central Scotland, Orkney, the Western Isles for instance. (We must always remember that these patterns are dependent on the quality of our record rather than the actual distribution of sites, although areas like Berwickshire do receive a high concentration of aerial reconnaissance).

So how comfortably does the notion of regional archaeologies sit with a critique of typologies? After all, these are defined typologically, usually by shared morphological traits common to a geographical area, or less often by artefact assemblages. In a sense, it is another way of offering a critique of our wider typologies, precisely because they are a collection of regionally different things, a compilation of regional trends. Perhaps if we looked at the localised or regional meanings of sites rather than the generalised big picture (coupled with looking at landscapes), we could begin to think more in terms of the social meanings of these places.

*Wider level.* Parker Pearson (forthcoming) suggests that there are things which link people across wide geographical areas in the Neolithic, from northern Scandinavia and across mainland Europe. These include his work, along with Ramilisonina, which proposes a direct analogy of the relative meanings of wooden and stone monuments in Madagascar across the Neolithic, with



particular reference to the landscape around Stonehenge (Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina 1998). The dangers with this idea is a return to universalism, to assumptions being made about people over huge geographical areas, and these are assumptions I don't think that we should make. They lose sight of the individual, of societies even, and whilst he is not trying to turn back the clock of archaeological thought by several decades, it is an idea which must be refined and worked through with care.

The evidence of the *cursus* sites in Scotland seems to point most closely to a combination of things working on a local and regional level. There do seem to be, from our known cropmark record, occasional glimpses at a regional tradition, perhaps most pervasively argued for Angus, and East Lothian, and it does seem that some areas may have had no cursiform monuments at all. I do not believe that the sites work in an ideological vacuum, and the concerns that they share are spread across wider geographical areas, some of which may be uncomfortably large. Perhaps the largest of all is of the ambiguity of monuments, which may reflect the combining of different architectural techniques and concerns from a variety of contacts and sources (eclectic places), people *doing their own thing*.

Thomas has recently written of a contradictory regional Neolithic where the distinctive local groups have re-inforced their identity through increasingly distinctive ways of maintaining authority. "The novel and distinctive character of some of the local products of cultural *bricolage* had the effect of making them suitable subjects for emulation or referencing in distant regions" (1998b, 55). It is through thinking about these architectural and topographical themes, a kind of *bricolage*, that we can begin to dissolve (or move beyond) the typologies which bind us.



### 10.3. Excavation

*“Archaeologists study the material remains of ancient human behaviour, the debitage (waste and by-products) of the past. They excavate archaeological sites large and small to write ancient history, filling museums and laboratories with jigsaw puzzles of scientific data, another form of debitage”* (Fagan 1995, 19)

*“It needs to be recognised that the intensely detailed procedures of excavation have the potential to be time-consuming to the detriment of interpretative thinking”* (Bender *et al* 1997, 150).

The quintessential archaeological activity is still seen as excavation, reinforced in public perception by *The Time Team* and *Meet the Ancestors*. These portray excavation as a science, with geophysics, painstaking recording techniques, and lots of complicated post-excavation work done with computers. For most of the history of archaeology as a discipline, excavation has been seen as just this, an objective process, personified in Barker's textbook of the discipline (1993). Techniques have been developed to make it more rigorous, more standardised, more efficient and nowadays more financially accountable. Yet this striving for objectivity is a facade according to recent critiques (see for instance Tilley 1989; Hodder 1997, 1999; Bender *et al* 1997), and excavation has for too long been regarded as a methodology beyond the scope, or interest, of post-processual thought.

Theoretically informed archaeologists have begun now to think about how we excavate, and how we publish the results. They have also put this into practice. They have begun to examine the processes of excavation itself, what we bring to this activity, and how we go about it. Hodder has written accounts of his 'reflexive excavation methodology', working and evolving at Çatalhöyük (1997). The excavation and survey work at Leskernick, as explained by Bender, Hamilton and Tilley, has seen the publication of diaries, and of chronological, not feature led, reports of work undertaken (1997). Chadwick, in *Assemblage*, has drawn attention to work undertaken within some English commercial units



on re-thinking ways of recording, such as his own ideas on the *pro forma* context sheets, or on stratigraphy (1998). Excavating at a Neolithic house at Crossiecrown, Mainland Orkney, in the summer of 1999, Colin Richards attempted to breed an on-site atmosphere of thinking differently about the dig. Students were encouraged to enter the house through the door, not by crossing the walls. They were to see this as a house, not as an object to be excavated (pers. comm.).

Promoted are ideas of interpretation, of polysemy, of breaking down excavation hierarchies, and of multivocality. These are (at last) re-evaluations of the role of subjectivity during excavation which do more than merely acknowledge it exists but is suppressed in the quest for objectivity. Most archaeologists realise that such quests are idealistic, but this does not mean that they accept that excavation is more than a data collecting exercise, nor do they give much thought to where the *present* of excavation fits in with the *past* we are excavating. I knew of an archaeologist working for a Unit who wanted to include a section in his excavation report on what he and the team felt about the excavation, about re-digging trenches of a much earlier dig, with the diaries of that excavation read at the camp-fire in the evening. He was never allowed to include this section in the final report. Many still seek to try to be as objective as possible, rather than accepting that perhaps subjectivity is not only an inherent part of excavation, but also beneficial.

In 1997 - 98 I directed two short seasons of excavation at Milton of Rattray with a fellow postgraduate, as recounted in chapter 6. It was only through the act of digging that we began to think about why we were working on theory-based research, and yet our excavation methodology was no different to how we did things on excavations we had undertaken in other intellectual atmospheres. We knew that our excavation report would not follow traditional lines and that we would produce interpretations of the sites based on our experiences as excavators, yet we also felt that during these experiences, our methodology had



been objective and empirical (a fact also bemoaned by Richards at Crossiecrown). *Tension*. Could theory change the way we dig?

In looking at how archaeologists excavate, and report on those excavations, I want to structure my thoughts on these issues (raised by 'doing' archaeology) in the dialectical manner of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In this case, if we consider the experience of excavation, I will argue that traditionally minded excavations represent objectivism. Hodder's reflexive excavation methodology shares many concerns with intellectualism. How has this dialectic shaped the way I have thought about and recorded the excavation (section 6.16)?

### 10.3.1. Objectivism

How might a traditional excavation happen?

Context sheets, photographs, statistics, 'facts', drawings, samples, lists. All collected together so that having returned home (meanwhile, back in the lab....), the site can be re-constructed, and made sense of.

The interim reports of the excavations of my two seasons at Milton of Rattray (Brophy & Baines 1997; Baines *et al* 1998) are my objective pole. These reports sit rather uneasily when compared with the unashamedly subjective account of the excavation in chapter 6. Here is an excerpt from the interim report for the first season.

*“Trench 2 :* In this trench, the topsoil was much easier to dig, and in the excavated area of 4 x 2.5m, one of the pit features shown on the AP was located (F003). It was clearly visible at the subsoil level as an elongate clay area, distinct from the coarse gravel it was dug into. Upon excavation, it was shown to have been a shallow oval pit, 2.6m long, 1.2 m wide, with a maximum depth of 35cm. It was reasonably shallow sided, slightly steeper on the southern side, with a flat bottom of dimensions 1.6m x 0.5m. It had a single fill, context 004, a loosely packed dark yellow, faintly brown sandy clay with occasional inclusions of



rounded stones. One such inclusion was 30cm long. This fill appeared to be a single stratigraphic unit, and had a 'turfy compactness'. A possible broken line of fairly large stones may run around the edge, slanting down into the feature. This feature conforms in plan to what we would expect from the AP, both in size, shape and orientation (which it shares with the alignment it lies upon). A smaller area of a similar material to the fill of this pit was located in a small area in the SW corner of the trench, also in the line of the alignment, but no time was available for the investigation of this at least during this season" (Brophy & Baines 1997, 3).

This is a rather dry and data-led statement on the excavation of one feature. Based on earlier critiques of this kind of traditional excavation report, like Tilley's *Excavation as theatre* (1989) and Hodder's *Writing archaeology* (1989), it is easy to see that the author is anonymous and that there is barely acknowledged interpretation going on during the dig. The reports are ordered in terms of features, with little idea of the chronology of discoveries or the emotions involved in these.

Excavation photographs now do not have people in them, the very people who sweat and labour to dig the features (plates 10.3 and 10.4). The sites are photographed like ghostly empty colourless places, not the bustling places they have been, with people talking, trowels scraping, barrow wheels squeaking. Archaeological digs are places with diggers, and whilst every photograph would not be served with a grinning dirty face looking out from within a post-hole, it would be nice to see more of those who re-dig the features and shape the spoil.

What of the experience, of excavating itself? The description of the excavation is only that, not the experience itself. There is nowhere in a report for how the excavation happened. The report is a veneer, a clean-cut report of a job well done. There is no hint of possible preconceptions taken to the dig (what exactly is a *cursus*?), nor of errors or mistakes. It has been sanitised and segmented. Excavation reports of some units, provided for developers and monument



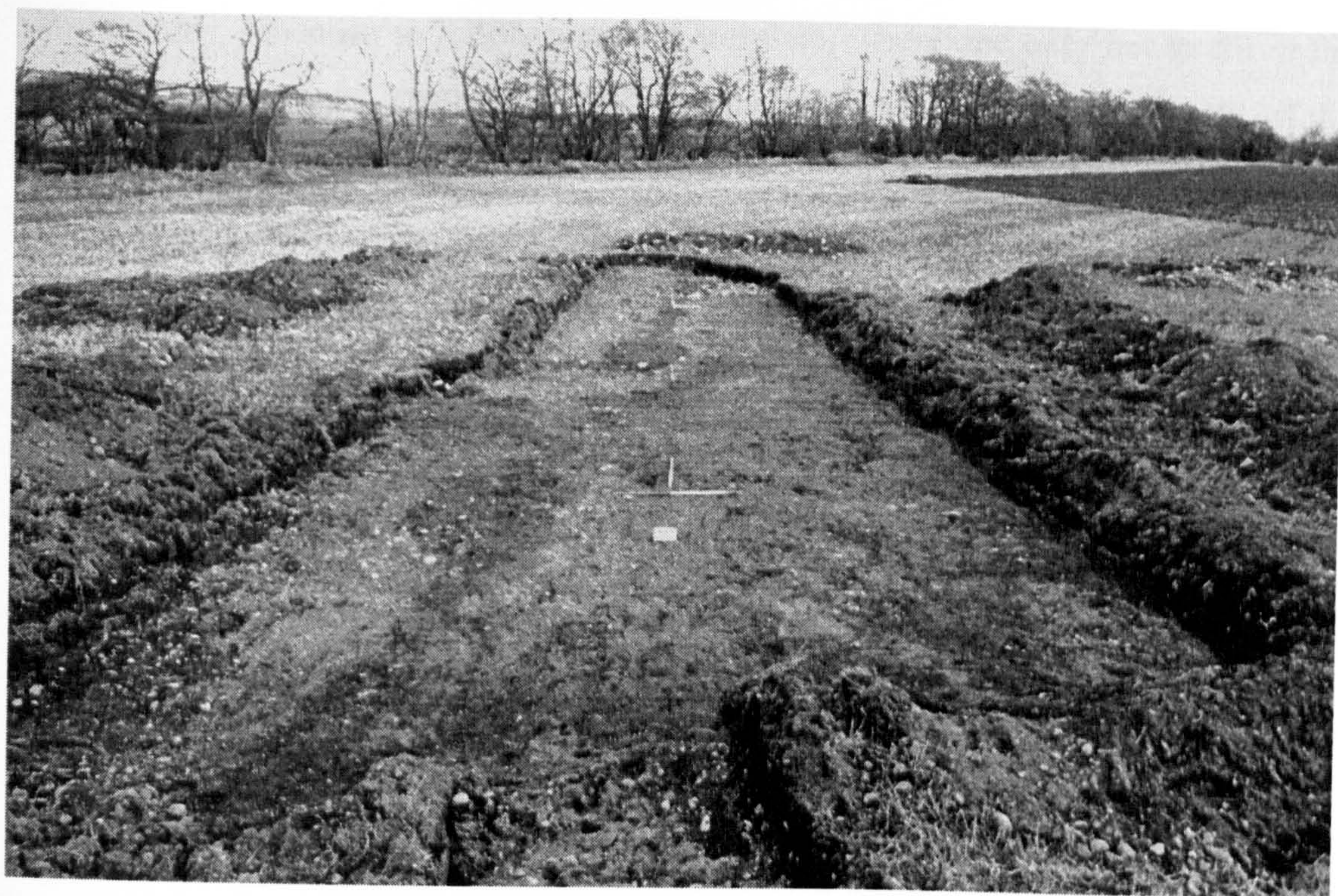


Plate 10.3 (top) The empty excavation trench, Milton of Rattray (trench 4).  
 Plate 10.4 (bottom) The inhabited excavation trench, Milton of Rattray (trench 5).



records, can seem to follow a pre-set template, where one only has to fill in the blanks. Chadwick (1998) has explored the given nature of context sheets, of the continual interpretation based on rather ambiguous stratigraphies, and how we can improve them so that interpretation is acknowledged, and, I would hope, encouraged. These are immediate media for putting down the phenomenological description after all, and, as Merleau-Ponty stresses, these are personal experiences. He believed that we cannot experience things as other people experience them (Langer 1989).

For theory in excavation, we cannot blank out subjectivity, pretend it is not there. What we need is, to coin a phrase, 'interpretation at the trowel's edge' (Hodder 1997, 694).

### 10.3.2. Intellectualism

This is exactly what Hodder (1997, 1999) calls for in his 'reflexive excavation methodology'.

He suggests we can move towards this through being reflexive, contextual, interactive, and multivocal. In practice, this has led to an innovative approach in the way they excavate at Çatalhöyük, from employing an anthropologist to work with the whole team, to setting up banks of computers, where personal dig diaries are available on-line unedited as they are written. A video camera is used to record things as they happen. Specialists in pottery, or lithics, or soils, are involved in excavating as well, being present as things are uncovered for the first time. Microscopy is used to analyse artefacts to break down the presuppositions we carry to these artefacts, especially breaking them down into morphological or functional types - they are viewed only at the molecular level as it were. The excavation results are placed on the internet, not as a final unequivocal report, but rather a 'raw data' available for the perusal and interpretation of all (or at least those lucky enough to have internet access).



Milton of Rattray 1998 (MR 98)      Context Number \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_

*Figure 10.2* This is what the context sheet at Milton of Rattray should have looked like...



What Hodder is trying to do is laudable, because he is addressing how a post-processual way of actually, really *doing* archaeology could look. He tries to break down the hierarchies which always crop up on digs, explicitly or otherwise. The access to knowledge is opened up by about as much as it could be, and everything is meant to be transparent, open to critique and interpretation. The data is no longer trapped in the linear format of the written word on the page, but is more flexibly presented in hypertext.

Yet I think that there are some problems with this approach, a mixture of the intellectual and the practical. It seems to me that Hodder is in essence attempting to reach objectivity through the back-door, to collect so many subjective facts or opinions or pieces of data, that this 'pure' subjectivity leads inevitably back to objectivity again. There is a kind of distancing from objectivity, yet ironically there is more data collected than on a traditional dig. This is what Merleau-Ponty would refer to as intellectualism, a way of describing the world which is impractical and ultimately unsuccessful because it tries to distance itself so far from empiricism. Essentially the individual consciousness is being used to (re)constitute the site.

Husserlian phenomenology (discussed in more depth in chapter 5) of course did just this, trying to see the world not only in terms of empirical science (the traditional and establishment view), but in terms of philosophy. To do this, he wanted to make philosophy the primary and pure science, and this involved the appropriation of scientific methodologies - descriptions of objects or actions were to be completely presuppositionless, the logic of science (if x leads to y, then y leads to z, then therefore....and so on). Part of his methodology was to collect all the horizons of experience, that is all possible experiences of an object, and ways of experiencing that object. If one was to look at a cube, one had to consider all possible angles of viewing the object, at various distances, under differing lighting conditions, and over time, in short, an infinite series of observations, which made his overall project to describe human consciousness from how it experiences the world, as futile and impossible.



Hodder, in trying to go against the grain of traditional empirical excavation methodologies, has adopted these techniques of excavation from the trowel to the photographic recording. He wants us to put aside our presuppositions when looking at artefacts, viewing them at the microscopic level where our typologies are to be broken down (and replaced with new ones). The sheer insatiable drive for subjective information, for thousands and thousands of words written by students, supervisors, pottery specialists and anthropologists, reminds me very much of a striving for all possible horizons of experience. Hassan noted in an otherwise unfair critique of Hodder's methodology that it involved 'infinite regression' (1997, 1023).

Every action, thought and emotion is logged and recorded, an impossible aim which in the end may weaken the project. I think it tries to do too much, and as it can never record the infinite details that potentially exist, it will always only be a partial record, a sample of what is going on. We can never be sure what is real, what is opinion, what is a video recording, what is virtual reality.

Practically speaking, the obvious concerns are those of finances, and the more cynically minded may believe that Ian Hodder can do this at Çatalhöyük because of who he is. Surely, in the current archaeological and social climate, it is hardly practical to set up computer networks on-site for a humble rescue excavation, and indeed would be difficult to persuade any developer that this should be funded. Yet perhaps this is only because we have not yet demonstrated the value to archaeology as a discipline of such approaches to excavation, because if this is how it actually was in archaeology as a whole, of course developers would fund it. They are being provided with a easier (and not even necessarily cheaper) alternative, the archaeological norm, and very few are doing anything to change this. John Barrett has proved that developers will listen to arguments about the benefits of more theoretically informed archaeological work with his involvement with the extensions at Manchester and Heathrow Airports (pers. comm.).



### 10.3.3. The third way?

So, just as Merleau-Ponty may have done, we have considered the objectivist ways of excavating, and found them either disappointing, or just woefully inadequate. Empiricism, and the commercial dig, give primacy to the objective physicality of things, and suggest a scientific clarity. Measurements, directions, order and objectivity - in the excavation report, and as the site is being excavated - give the impression that this is a process which could have been carried out by a robot with equal results. The site is the laboratory rat, examined from all angles, measured, probed into, x-rayed, cut into and dissected, all so that we can perhaps deduce something about the human condition. It gives too much status to physical involvement in archaeology and tries to suppress the mind. It can become join-the-dots archaeology, routine, a matter of filling in the blanks.

Yet we must also acknowledge that it recounts a physicality which we cannot deny, and this interpretative data forms a basis around which we can begin to discuss and communicate about the site. We have this experience because something is there which we want or need to excavate, and what we find (from the nature of the site to the level of preservation, and from the finances available to the quality of the workers) has a role in shaping what this experience becomes.

Also, we have looked at Hodder's approach, the very opposite of clear cut objectivity, a form of intellectualist excavation, and very politically correct. Here, there are many equal voices, informed and uninformed, unedited and sometimes bizarre. Firm preconceptions and boundaries are dissolved in the lens of the microscope or by job descriptions. Fact becomes opinion, and can be replayed and reviewed to the infinite degree. This captures the interpretive nature of life, and yet is also futile, impossible and perhaps over ambitious, where the consciousness has primacy over the physicality of what is excavated to the point where that it almost becomes unimportant.



However, the ideas of giving the diggers a voice, of listening to minority opinions, of dropping the veil of objectivity are all vitally important. There is a feeling that this methodology is important precisely because it is so far removed from the norm of excavation recording, a response to decades of increasingly scientific digs, and increasing specialisation of the work force. It is important that those who dig features have a voice, and it is helpful (if not always possible) that people regarded as specialists can be on site when a piece of pot, a lump of charcoal, or human bones are found. The use of the internet is not only a sensible use of exciting technology, but a necessary response to the future of publishing. It solves the problems, for instance, of the multi-levelled reports and fascicules produced since the mid 1970's. Transparency and openness are post-modern goals, but they are also important in a discipline which deals with people's heritage.

Descriptions of the objectivist world often propose distinct boundaries. I have argued that empiricism gives primacy to the body over mind, object over subject, and in some ways, Hodder gives primacy to the mind over the body, subject over object, although this is by no means general across his methodology, nor as distinct a dichotomy as the traditional approaches he critiques. Remember, for Merleau-Ponty, the *lived* world is different. Things are blurred and ambiguous.

This has clear echoes with archaeology, not least because excavation or indeed any kind of archaeological fieldwork is experience. The excavated sites (see chapters 3, and 7 to 9), and the excavation methodologies themselves help us to begin to realise that there can be no clear cut solutions to 'archaeological problems', but only ambiguity, possibility, and blurred edges. We need to strive for balance between the polar extremes described above, to capture this ambiguity, but also to acknowledge that this is inevitable, not a disappointing 'result'. (I mentioned when discussing typology that it has been seen as less successful to come away from an excavation and not know what type of site one was digging).



This rather politically fashionable label - the 'third way' - was, to Merleau-Ponty, a fusion of the roles of body and mind, where both were involved in experiencing the world, acting in the world, and understanding the world. Shanks (1992) also has written of a 'third way' when considering the role of archaeological theory in 'real' archaeology. This is, as I have mentioned, the *tension* felt by interpretative archaeologists excavating, and is often never resolved satisfactorily. Chadwick (1998) discusses the inherent dichotomy of the context sheet, with a top half template of filling in the blanks with facts, and then a space for 'interpretation'. Excavation is full of tensions like this, often never acknowledged.

Excavation is experience. Perhaps then we can apply phenomenology to this experience as, after all, phenomenology is the description of experiences. Phenomenology has several components which we can bring to excavation.

Firstly, what I have termed pre-phenomenology. Whenever we experience anything, this is shaped by our past experiences, our motivations, and so on. When digging, we may have dug at a similar site before. Before my excavations at Milton of Rattray, I had worked on the excavation of Neolithic post-defined 'ritual' enclosure a few miles to the south at Littleour (just to the north of the Cleaven Dyke), as well as the Holywood excavations with post-holes found at both sites.

We may have preconceptions about what we wanted to find. I hoped that the pits we saw on the aerial photographs were large post-holes, full of burnt post stumps. There was also the expectation that something exciting would be found between these post-holes which wasn't visible on the aerial photographs.

Physical reality constrained me - financially, time wise, and with personnel. (Later, I trapped my thumb in the minibus door and couldn't trowel for most of the second season).



A good start would be for us to consider these things before we dig, to think about what we are taking into the excavation with us, and to record this in a chronological account of the excavation.

The phenomenological experience itself is as we dig. Our role in this is to record and describe the phenomenological experience, because as soon as it has happened, it is gone. Photographs, context sheets, video recordings are mere reproductions of the experience, open to re-interpretation by the many. Yet digging a feature, context or area is often one person's experience, so only they can describe it as it happened to them. This phenomenological description includes the context sheet, which could easily be presented as a blank sheet of A4 paper (10.2, above), especially for more experienced excavators who no longer need a crib sheet.

The experience of excavating is also a flawed one, with occasional errors and mis-judgement, and sometimes mistakes are made. Interpretations are changed on the basis of new evidence. Such things could be recorded (the latter usually is) and then recounted in the final report (fig. 10.3).

This is as far as phenomenology can take us. The phenomenological descriptions need to be interpreted, as subjective accounts of what people experienced. As Hodder (1997) suggests, here there will be multivocality, and there can never be a correct answer for us (nor should we look for one).

This is where we can see that excavation is a little like life. It is ambiguous, flexible and unpredictable. We are in the lived world, where the body defines the point of contact with the site, where the trowel becomes an extension of the hand, the first sensory sensation of the experience. Our interaction with the archaeological traces is neither determined by the physicality of the site itself (which would be objectivism), nor is there any way that we can dismiss this physicality (intellectualism). Rather, phenomenology demands that we get involved in the world, that we see the interpretative role we have and also the



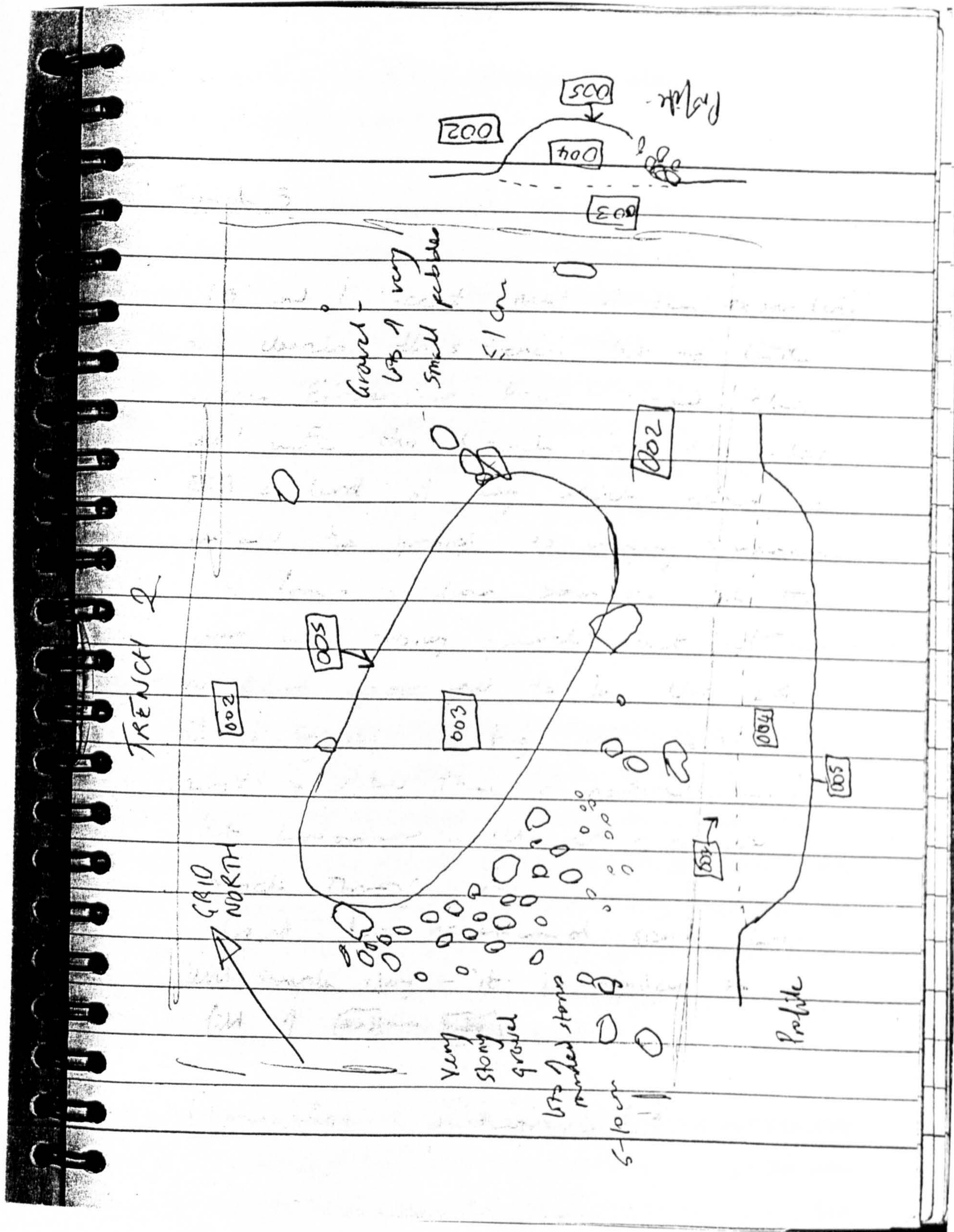


Figure 10.3 Extract from the Milton of Rattray daybook (1997). This shows a sketch plan of trench 2.



role played by what we are interpreting, a hermeneutics, where subject and object become ever closer and inter-dependent.

The excavation itself has to be recounted in some published form, and I would draw the attention of the reader again to the 'third-way' report of Milton of Rattray in section 6.16. This will be published in a journal, but at the same time, also on the internet, where the raw recording - context sheets, photographs, drawings - will also be published. This report is not my work alone, just as the excavation itself was not. Those who excavated features have offered descriptions and interpretations of these experiences, and I have merely edited them together. The report included sections on pre-excavation, and is ordered chronologically rather than by features. It is an interim statement, an experiment in style.

#### 10.3.4. Practical tensions

There is more *tension* here. This kind of report may not be acceptable to those who fund excavations - Historic Scotland for instance. The future of excavation publications for some archaeologists may be a compromise, a balance between a report written as we feel it should be written with a level of archaeological data attached in some way. This compromise was achieved fairly successfully with the Leskernick report (Bender *et al* 1997) with an appendix containing full context descriptions and site details. (A list of context descriptions for Milton of Rattray are included in this thesis as Appendix II).

I am not sure how practical this kind of report is for more complex or large-scale excavations. It is also unclear how it could work where many more people were digging, with varying levels of experience and descriptive writing ability. (How many supervisors and directors in commercial rescue digs really want to, or even could, give their workers a voice?). Like so many things in life, it is only through practice (as with Hodder at Çatalhöyük) that we will develop methodologies for various situations, and I think that this type of report is right for this excavation, but not, say, the excavations at Danebury.



The practical actions of excavations themselves perhaps do not need much alteration. (The excavation of Milton of Rattray was undertaken in the typical way, with the theory being applied to the interpretation of the site, but not really to the excavation methodology). This is not a plea for the burning of mattocks, the shredding of context sheets, and running down the batteries of EDMs. At the end of the day, it is not the trowel which excavates, but the person holding the trowel. There is nothing drastically wrong with the way which we excavate, but perhaps the way we *think* about (and during) excavating needs examined. This is also not all about the person who is excavating, their thoughts, preconceptions, likes, dislikes, or feelings towards trowelling in the rain. All these things combine to influence how we dig and record and interpret on site and after, but they are intrinsically related to the physical archaeology itself. You cannot excavate a post-hole which does not exist, but you can record a context which is not there. There is a fine balance, an interplay, where the site and person meet at a fusion of horizons, and that point of fusion is the trowel.

So, I believe that the way forward for archaeologists is surely to apply theory to the action of excavation itself, through acknowledging what we bring to the excavation, through the interaction of the experiencing yet constrained body, and the interpreting subject, the tension between the drawing and measuring (interpretation again) and that fact that it is me, not you, that is doing these things. *We are always interpreting something.*

The writing of the report above was revealing, uncovering things about the excavation process which are either brushed under the proverbial carpet, or not even noticed. Looking back I can now see (to my embarrassment) that I was trying to convince myself that the feature in the corner of trench 2, which later turned into perhaps the most exciting aspect of the excavation, was nothing at all. The worry of the modern pottery was noted in the day book, but explained away with little thought (fig. 10.3). How often do we do this when excavating, when interpreting, wanting things to fit our preconceptions, and unwilling to think too



hard about things which are not quite right, like using scissors to make that jigsaw piece fit? And yet are we willing to confess all to our colleagues and contemporaries, to our potential future employers? Or will the veneer of the flawless excavation be maintained in the final publication, the truth lost in the archives?

The value of excavation as experience is clear to me personally - it is open ended, subjective and ambiguous, and shaped by what is there to find. Excavation is just like life. What is still unclear is whether the discipline can ever accept interpretations of what we spend money on to excavate which are neither final nor conclusive, but rather works in progress.



## 11. Being-in the-world-as-archaeologists

### 11.1. Being there

Here are some experiences of places and monuments.

“On entering the enclosure, its monumental proportions become dramatically apparent with the circle of huge megaliths towering above. This architecture serves to invoke sensations, both of wonder at the achievement and awe inspired by the height...” (Richards 1993, 175, on The Stones of Stenness).

“Only those with academic credentials, or those in the advertising industry with enough money to pay for privileged access, cross the ropes and, under strict supervisions, enter the stones” (Bender 1998, 122, on Stonehenge)

“We’re in the Orkneys. It’s very good. We’ve met lots of funny people. All very super. Back on the 10th” (Perec 1997, a postcard in real colour).

“Northern end, bank is wider and more massive than anywhere else. It has a very good position, overlooking a small stream valley, and only within 100m of end, land falls steeply away. Cursus probably in line with a low hill in the distance...In open section, I experimented by getting Dad to stand on other side of the bank, From middle of ‘berm’, I could only see his head (he is 5’ 4” or 5’ 2”, depending on leg)” (Extract from my fieldwork notebook describing parts of the north-west half of the Cleaven Dyke, experimenting, experiencing).

*We are involved in the world, and involved in the archaeology. Archaeology is part of the world, part of the past, part of the present, and the future. The monument is now part of us, and we are part of it.*

### 11.2. The Wheeldale ‘Roman road’. 12th August 1999. A walk.

We arrived in a small convoy of two cars, after our rendezvous at the Horse Shoe Inn. We were visiting an enigmatic monument known as the Wheeldale Roman



Road, or Wade's Road (named after a giant who supposedly laid the stones which make the monument), located near Whitby. In the literature, it was suspected to be a Roman road, as it seemed to lie on a possible route between two Roman forts, and other stretches elsewhere were quite convincingly Roman. The monument itself was cleared of peat at the turn of the century by the gamekeeper. This was a labour of love that involved an unknown amount of reconstruction work and tidying up (Hayes and Rutter 1964; see also Witcher 1997). Our task was to look at a stretch of linear monument of about 1km length, enclosed by two National Parks information boards one at either end. It had been suggested to us that there were a few peculiarities about this site which indicated it was not Roman at all, not even a road. It may instead have prehistoric origins and implicitly it may even have been a bank barrow (B. Vyner pers. comm.). There was no chance to clear one's mind of these preconceptions.

We walked both ways along the monument. It consisted of a fairly flat surface about 4 to 5m across, occasionally paved, and sometimes with a few courses of stone on either side defining a tidy edge (in places, with a suspiciously modern look, possible attributable to our gamekeeper). There was a slight appearance of a ditch to one side, probably an effect of levelling out as the feature cuts across a gentle slope at some points. A series of culverts cut across the 'road', some original, some later than the initial construction. There was no sign of metalling. It apparently starts and finishes in the middle of no-where and wobbles rather a lot in some places.

The walk started at the south end very close to a small river and a fording point. Its route here was uphill, crossed by a modern road, and it appeared very degraded. The last visible remnants here suggested a slight swelling outwards, a kind of terminal. We walked up the slope, across a stile (where a small section was fenced in) and then in struck across more level moorland. The route here was not apparent at first with a series of false horizons obscuring the view ahead. Then, almost by surprise, we walked up to the edge of a stream where the monument stopped. A short gap then it began again, respecting the stream,





Plate 11.1 The Wheeldale walk 1. Looking north along the 'wall', the view ahead lost beyond the near horizon.  
 Plate 11.2 The Wheeldale walk 2. The 'wall' winds its way uphill towards the southern end.



making no effort to bridge it or cross it. A slightly boggy area was also avoided later, with a large gap left for it. Most un-road like. At these points, it was possible to believe that this was a megalithic bank barrow, with the stony mound swelling upwards and outwards at these gaps on either side of the stream.

We followed a curve across the moor, towards a dry-stone wall that cut across the 'road', not robbing the stone, but instead following the contours of the feature it overlies. At this point, there were two cists, built into the edge of the 'road'. Both looked rather unconvincing, but their presence suggested again that this was unlikely to be a Roman road - they would have either moved them or avoided them (G. Maxwell pers. comm.).

We crossed an enormous stile, and beyond the wall the topography changed dramatically and soon we were descending down a steep boulder strewn slope. At this point it became bizarre to think of anybody using this as a road for anything other than walking or perhaps droving, as large rocks stuck out from the monument and huge boulders actually formed its edge incorporated into the architecture. At the end of the walk it fades away, invisible in an adjacent arable field, marked by an information board.

Turning and walking back up the hill, nothing could be seen ahead other than the lip of the steep slope. It was clear from here that the monument snaked up the hill, using the contours to best effect, dodging between immobile boulders. This is where you would route a road if you had to climb this slope. A bank barrow, I was sure, would have ploughed straight up the hill ignoring the topography. It was only when near the top of the slope that anything beyond could be seen, and then the view was obscured by the wall (plate 11.2).

Walking back across the moor once again the streams were only visible when at a 'terminal' in the monument. Indeed, from about 20m back, there is no apparent gap and the route ahead is a continuous one. Again, the monument reveals itself only at certain subtle topographic rises and ridges (plate 11.1). Finally, wandering



back along the final stretch, my view was focused on the water ahead, and the ford, and the car park, the car, warmth.

This experience had it all, just like a short Dorset cursus. It was crossed by streams which it respected and even apparently recognised by increased monumentality at these points. There were several radical changes in the topography along its route. It incorporated earlier burial features within its architecture (respecting and yet including them in the boundary). Natural features such as boulders were actually appropriated into the monument itself. It terminated overlooking water at one end and, more than that, a water crossing point.

This site is almost certainly a boundary of some kind, perhaps prehistoric, perhaps post-Roman. Yet it reads in the landscape like a cursus, like a bank barrow, like a ritualised experience. Should this worry us? I did not intend to ever think about a phenomenological approach to this place, it was a day off after all, a fun trip. Yet like many areas of my research, a strange and surprising experience often prompts deeper thought about something which was becoming a given. It brought me back to a question which I had asked myself before, whether phenomenology is a gimmick, a clever way of saying 'experience'? Does it just provide a tour guide to a monument? Or is there more to it, something that makes it meaningful and valuable to archaeologists (Brophy 1998b)? What did the Wheeldale experience say about the methodology, the philosophy, even the archaeologist (me)?

### **11.3. Me, experiencing the landscape**

Tilley's phenomenology of landscape has looked at a series of Neolithic monument types and complexes in southern England and Wales from the perspective of his experience of these sites in the landscape (1994, 1999). These are his journeys (although one was shared with Bender (1998)). This was the



cursus as *he* saw it, and the length of time taken to travel from end to end was how long it took *him*. *He* had to cross a stream. *He* stumbled over an old cliff. He includes photographic viewpoints from his walk - ambiguously, is this his eye-view, or is he guiding ours? (A more detailed critique of this type of phenomenological experience is part of the Hollywood hermeneutic, chapter 6).

Tilley was not the first archaeologist to document his experience along an assumed prehistoric pathway. We are fortunate that we have another account of a 'walk' along the Dorset cursus, undertaken by RJC Atkinson in a paper he published in *Antiquity* in 1955. For him, there was no stated phenomenological experience for there was no phenomenological framework. He tackled the cursus by travelling along it because he saw this as the only way to describe a monument of such size. To give purely the big picture alone would not do justice to some of the intricacies of the earthwork. In his account, it is ambiguous as to whether he walked along the cursus or simply visited locations he deemed of interest (I suspect the latter). He acts as a tour guide. He discussed the topography descriptively, merely another feature like a Roman Road he passed or modern forestry plantations and roads he came across.

Is there essentially any difference between Tilley's walks, Atkinson's guide, and my experiences at Wheeldale? There are three inter-related issues which this comparison throws up.

1. *All three accounts are kinds of narratives and they are related by the authoritative voice of an archaeologist, a privileged group. They represent solipsism, especially Tilley and Brophy.*

Phenomenological accounts of such sites are how an archaeologist encounters them. We have a certain body of knowledge as we enter a cursus - this may be earlier excavation reports, or aerial photographs we perused the evening before. We know about that flint scatter just over the near horizon and the rig and furrow traces crossing the opposite terminal of the cursus. We remember an experience



we had in a stone circle in Orkney or the Lake District, and we remember Tilley's book. Atkinson's site plan shows the Dorset cursus running in a modern landscape. Wartowsky wrote, "The constitution of the world....is the work of an active subject. But the subject is not a philosopher. He is a man" (1977, 312). Substitute philosopher for archaeologist. This is a fundamental problem, because we cannot stand aside and experience things as anything else. When I go to the football, I experience the emotions of the game as a fan and an archaeologist. Does the 'privileged' information I carry make my experience any more, or less valid? Do I know too much?

John Barrett (1994) argues for an opening up of past experiences to the 'General Public' when discussing Stonehenge and the approaching avenue. His photographic and textual description of the experiences of walking along the avenue, uphill, towards Stonehenge, contrast sharply with the concrete-time-tunnel-and-gift-shop experience currently on offer. He argued that the public are being cheated of a meaningful experience of Stonehenge. Yet if the paying public were guided to walk up the avenue to the circle do archaeologists merely become the powerful elite? Our experiences are fobbed on to others as being informed experiences. Barrett has noted that many sites' open to the public have plans on boards. Before they even experience a stone circle they have seen it from the air, in black and white, with a north arrow and a sticker saying 'You are here'.

Can we think about different people experiencing, archaeologist and non-archaeologist? How realistic is it to contextualise the subject still further, to recognise the embodiment of others experiencing the same space in different ways? Is it enough to acknowledge that someone will have a different experience, a different interpretation, a different Being-in-the-world? Or do I have to write their archaeologies for them? Tilley (1991), in his study of rock-carvings at Nämforsen, Sweden, approached the site from different theoretical viewpoints (hermeneutics, structuralist, and linguistics) and came up with different interpretations each time. His point of course was that the material record is ambiguous and polysemic, there to be given meaning.



Must we be like Husserl, endlessly searching for all possible horizons of experience, all possible ways of seeing and approaching a thing in space and time - an infinite exercise for even one individual? Isn't archaeology difficult enough without adding unnecessary complexity?

I am not arguing that it is not my place to write a Marxist or feminist or structuralist or surrealist phenomenological interpretation of *cursus* monuments, but I'm sure there are others who could do it better. Perhaps an attempt should be made to bring together a series of interpretations of the same archaeological site or 'problem'.

Gavin Macgregor and I have recently written of our hopes for just such an archaeology. "Inevitably our experience of these monuments represents only one account, only one perspective of a potentially infinite number. It could be argued that phenomenology offers as many different accounts of experience as there are people to experience...We feel that the next logical step to our work is to study the experience of different people at these monuments who have other perspectives on the world; variables such as age, gender, class, religion, mobility, degree of processualism! Ultimately our understanding of these monuments will only come about through dialogue between these parties, dialogues which will inevitably be contingent and open-ended. The positive contribution of phenomenology is that it, therefore, demands multi-vocal approaches to the study of the past" (Brophy & MacGregor forthcoming).

We are all interpreters, looking to find meanings for our everyday lives. When I'm at a football match, I watch the game, interpret the team set-up, listen to the fans, experience the stadium. Other days I visit *cursus* monuments. We should remember that we are dealing with sites which had many meanings to many people through time, and that you or I are simply another level of this, another view, another experience. What it means to us is as valid as our thoughts on what



they once meant to others, and we should be willing to listen to the views of others, non-archaeologists as well.

I will return to the problem raised here of multiple interpretations in point 3.

*2. What of the nature of the experience? Atkinson presents a description of a thing, which is essentially what phenomenology is all about. Do we really need all of this French and German philosophy to describe and deal with archaeological sites? Or, to put it another way, is phenomenology only valid when one is aware of the writings of Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty? Is an experience meaningless because we neglect the ontological implications of what we have done?*

How different is Atkinson's description to Tilley's epic walk? Both were experiences of sorts. Both accounts are interpretations of an experience which we, the reader, must further interpret. Both formalised interpretations from their experiences and secondary comparanda - Tilley with ethnographic examples, Atkinson with a Classical one. Both discuss the ritualistic nature of the sites, the restricted groups which may have had access to these sites. There is suggested a control of knowledge - the rules of the rituals, the times of use, who could use it, what direction they moved. Tilley and Atkinson experienced the cursus in different directions.

Yet the vital difference is that Tilley experienced the site on the ground, and Atkinson did not. A critique of another recent interpretation of a Neolithic landscape (Darvill 1997) runs along the same lines. Writing in a volume which in the preface advocates a phenomenological approach (Topping 1997), Darvill re-orders the cosmology of the Stonehenge area, suggesting a series of embedded alignments on monuments and solar events. Yet this is not an *involved* archaeology and could well have been (and probably was) worked through looking at plans, maps, the observations of others, and excavation reports (fig. 11.1).



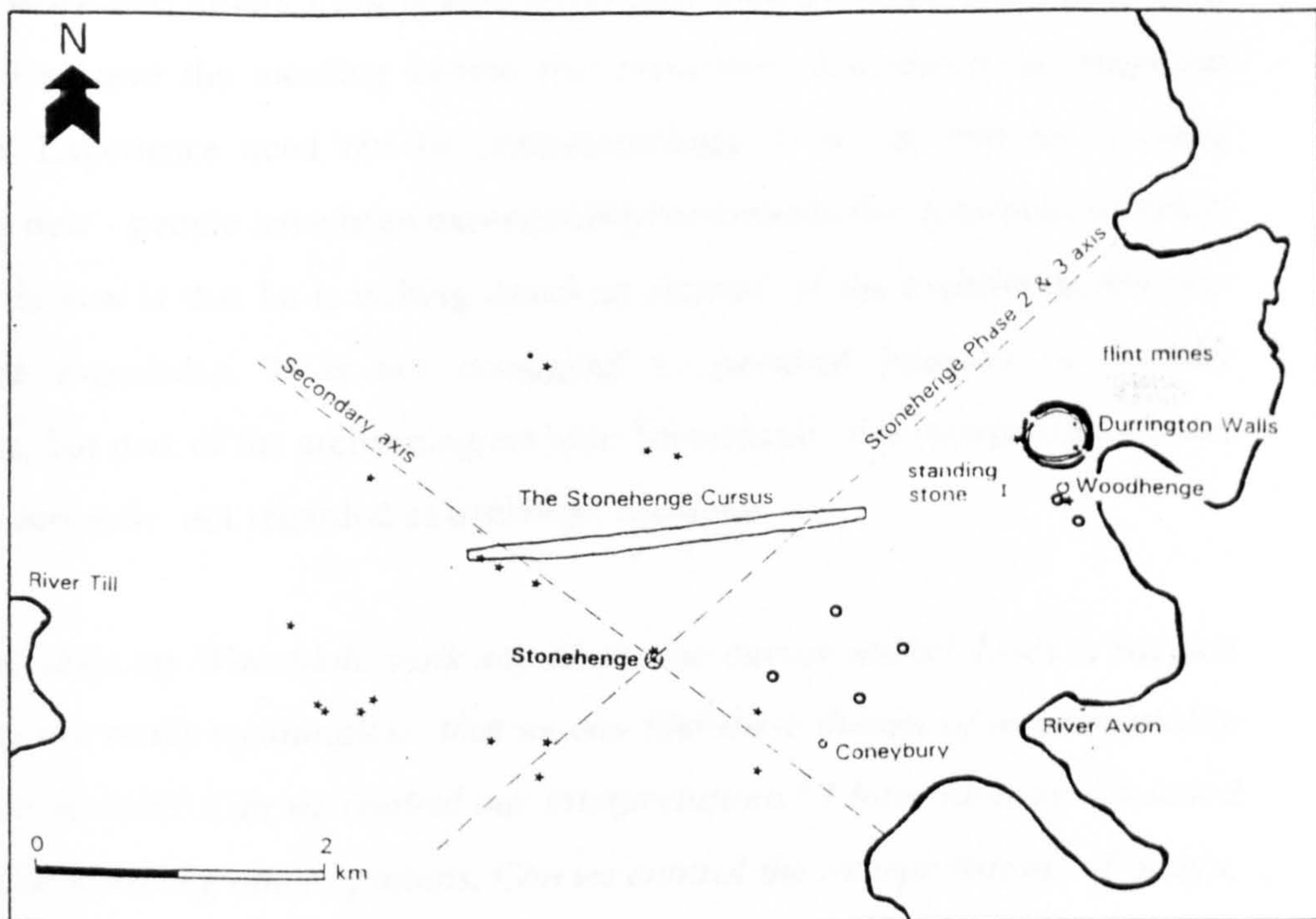


Table 1 A schematic overview of the lives of megaliths in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Birth, Childhood	c. 4000–2700	TRB culture, Globular Amphora culture	megaliths built and used as burial sites
Youth	c. 2800–1600	Single Grave culture, Early Bronze Age	reused as burial sites <i>closing of megaliths</i>
Earlier Adult Life	1200–600 600–1 cal. BC AD 1–600 600–1200	Late Bronze Age pre-Roman Iron Age Roman Iron Age (and Migration period) Slavic Period	throughout: secondary burials, finds in and near megaliths, tradition of enclosed burial mounds, imitation of mounds  <i>'paganization' of megaliths?</i>
Later Adult Life	1200–1400 1400–1750	Early German Period Later Medieval and Early Modern Period	finds in and near megaliths, stones reused  <i>'historization' of megaliths</i>
Old Age	1750–1830 1830–1990 present	Romantic Period Modernity Post-Modernity	appreciated by poets, painters, travellers work by antiquarians and archaeologists, protection  <i>preservation, presentation</i>

Figure 11.1 (top) Darvill's detached re-interpretation of the Stonehenge landscape (1997, fig.1.1).  
Figure 11.2 (bottom) The biography of monuments (from Holtorf 1998, table 1).



Tilley's work also differs from Atkinson's in that his experience was consciously trying to achieve the meaning behind the experience, not merely an empirical exercise. Experience need not be phenomenology. It is not that he is doing anything new - people have been experiencing monuments for thousands of years. All that is new is that he is writing down an account of his experience, his pre-reflective experience. It is not consigned to personal memory or friendly anecdote, but part of the archaeological text. Importantly, the interpreting subject is taken seriously, not regarded as irrelevant nonsense.

*3. What does my Wheeldale walk say about the cursus walks? Does it suggest that they are really meaningless, that we can find these themes of monumentality wherever we look? Can we control our interpretations? I have already discussed the role of involving other opinions. Can we control the interpretations of others, or at least judge them?*

It seems the possibilities are endless. It is like the phenomenology of Husserl which was presuppositionless and he ended up in the fruitless, infinite search for the horizons of experience. This could be chaos and there has to be some control. The issue of relativism has been discussed at some length by a Lampeter Archaeology Workshop (1997), and there is no need to cover this ground here. Suffice to say that relativism is one of the major problems of current archaeological thought, with the acceptance of multiple interpretations being tied in with where the boundaries (ethical and moral included) for these interpretations lie. Hodder (1997) has argued that his excavation methodology was partly a response to the varying claims on the symbology and meaning of Catalhöyük by various non-archaeological or fringe archaeological groups and individuals. He opens up the discourse to them, via the internet and discussion groups, but one feels that he still retains the power to over-rule or discredit some of these ideas. It is not a question of whether there should be control and standards over what people think about the past but where the limits should be and what criteria we use to judge multiple interpretations.



Perhaps a potential answer lies with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, through two areas of his *Phenomenology of Perception*. These are the temporality of experience, and his dialectic approach to thinking about experiences.

He argues that how we act in the world is not a detached moment in time, decontextualised from our past and present. So what shapes our involvement with archaeological places and of our descriptions of our experiences? There are our pre-conceptions, attitudes, prejudices and knowledge. This stems from our roles in life - in my case, archaeologist, male, western European, late 20th century, overweight, Hamilton Accies supporter (in no particular order). (Remember, as I have mentioned, we are archaeologists, we have, when we enter the field, a body of knowledge which is, in effect, a modern reconstruction of the past). These are often unchangeable and inescapable. This is closely related to the pre-reflective knowledge of the *lived-body*.

According to Merleau-Ponty dialectical critique of the objectivist world we can suggest that Atkinson's description of the Dorset cursus was detached and impersonal. The Dorset cursus was merely an object. But, more intellectualist approaches also fall into the objectivist world and here Merleau-Ponty places transcendental phenomenology and anything which places the subject ahead of the object. I suppose that the constituting mind of Tilley could be seen as an example of this, opening the door for infinite experiences, because it is non-reflective, self-centred and it could be argued that the archaeology is incidental. My walk at Wheeldale included similar interpretations and perceptions, despite the obviously different archaeology.

These are, of course, caricatures and Atkinson and Tilley are not at the polar extremes of objectivity and subjectivity respectively. Nevertheless, they do tend towards those poles. By contrast, Merleau-Ponty argues for a 'third-way' between the two based on the experiencing, knowledgeable, *lived-body*. This body has pre-reflective understanding of how to act in the world, based on our temporal nature, and this lies outwith the scope of the anthropocentric traditional



ways of thinking. He does retain aspects of both the object and subject in constructing a third way of looking at an experience.

This brings us full circle again, in a sense, thinking about the tensions we face in everyday life and the tensions we work through as archaeologists. It is all about the balance between subjectivity and objectivity. It seems to me that a combination of the two is a realistic and helpful goal. This is a discipline which is based around material culture and around the imprints made on the land by our predecessors. It is also based on those people themselves, how they act in the world, how they constitute society, and how people and societies interact with one another. Then there are the things which we bring to the discipline and the things which we take away from it.

So archaeologists should be concerned with the physicality of the sites which we deal with and also with the ideologies and beliefs and needs which go along with these. They interact and meet at the monument, the house, the lithic scatter, the field-system, the carved totem, the river, the boulder, the hill-top, the burial mound. These traces of past lives long gone are what draw us to study the past, to let us know that there is a past and was a past. But precisely because it draws us with our pasts and presents and futures, because it draws in our agency, then inevitably there must be a fusion here too. We should approach the site or landscape aware of the point of contact, of interaction, because it is here that the physical reality of the place and the body (the object), and the preconceptions and life experiences of the person (the subject), come together to produce archaeological discourse.

So the possibilities need not be limitless. They are based on who we are and who we have been, and upon the physical reality of the past in the present. This is not a blank canvas but rather a thoughtful exercise where must consider what we bring to the process of archaeological fieldwork. The walk at Wheeldale was silly really, an exercise in bringing my experience at linear cropmark sites across Scotland, and treating this place as exactly the same phenomenon. Once the



archaeological evidence (which could include, say, any future excavation and the interpretations of others) is brought together with my preconceptions and visits to other monuments the story of my walk seems unlikely, fatuous even.

#### 11.4. Conclusion

In the opening chapter I set out five themes which I hoped to discuss during this thesis. In a sense my research has been as much (if not more so) about archaeological practice as it has been about looking at a group of archaeological sites. These five themes reflected not only issues raised by studying *cursus* monuments but also raised further questions about some of the methodologies and language that we as archaeologists often take for granted.

So where are we now with these themes?

*Typology.* I have found it virtually impossible to break free of the language of typology, and of the human urge to classify and make order. The suggestion that I have made that we consider the concerns of life which so obviously transcend our typologies is certainly a starting point. However, it could be argued that I am merely replacing one division of the past with another. To this I would have to agree to some extent, but would also argue that the areas of life which I have inevitably lumped together are more related to human practice and reflect the diversity of the archaeological record. This is opposed to the traditional approach of a detached un-reflective typology which looks for similarities over differences. Human places are ambiguous, and considering the ways these places are defined and change through time (not static plans), and thinking of these as inhabited places (then and now) may help us to think about these ambiguities.

*How we 'do' archaeology.* A dialectical account of an excavation undertaken in 1997 and 1998 will hopefully be published next year (Baines *et al* forthcoming). This will hopefully resolve in some ways the tensions of an interpretative report (third-way) but still providing the technical data needed for those interested. I am not advocating an abandonment of excavation reports as they now stand, but rather a different way of doing things which more readily captures the context of



the dig and how it actually happened. These are complimentary, not exclusive. A larger scale excavation is planned for the near future, and it is important to think about the way we work in other areas of archaeology such as aerial photography and cropmark interpretation.

*Phenomenology.* This thesis has not touched on all relevant areas of Merleau-Ponty's work, especially regarding interaction between people. Nor have I presented a substantial critique of his lack of development of the 'third way' or an origin for the mechanism of bodily understanding. The philosophy of Merleau-Ponty is still helpful in two distinct ways - in letting us think about how we 'do' archaeology; and informing our fieldwork and interpretations. The potential for a thoughtful application of phenomenological theory is obviously not restricted to walking along *cursus* monuments. Again I am thinking about the applications of phenomenological reflective theory in aerial photography and monument typology. It should also not be restricted to so-called ritual monuments but rather across the landscape and spectrum of human activities.

*What I bring to these sites.* I hope that I have made the point that our context, who we are, how we felt, our expertise and pasts, or abilities and failings, are all part of how we record and interpret traces of the past. We cannot strive for some kind of presuppositionlessness. Rather our situatedness in the world of the present (and our past experiences and future motivations) must shape how we think about the past.

*Interpretations.* We should not look for clear-cut answers to our archaeological questions. There can be no such thing and this should be embraced rather than be a cause for concern. These places that we study and the people who inhabited them were temporal and changed through time. The meanings of these places are fluid and ambiguous. Our interpretations add to the biographies of a place.....



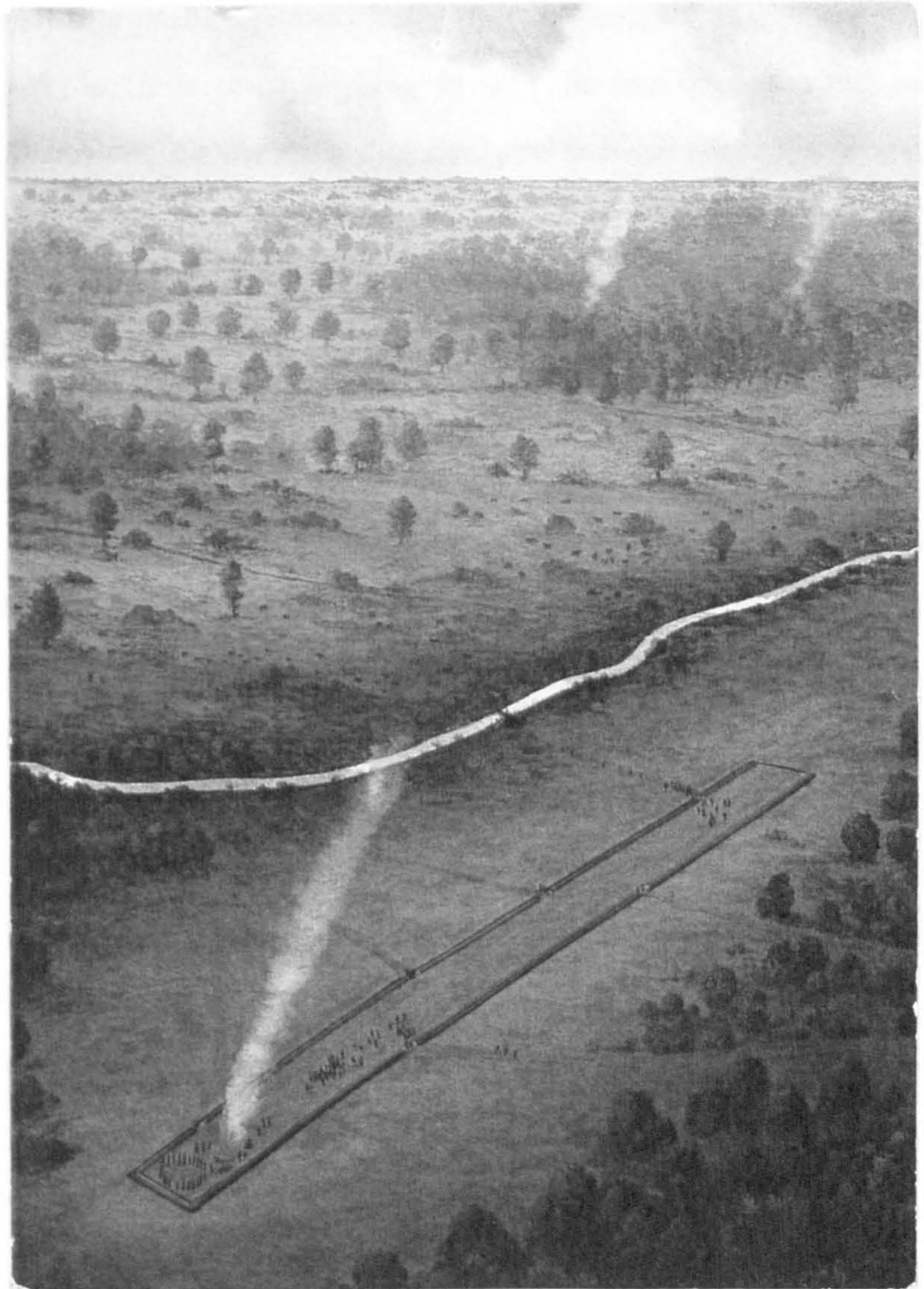


Plate 11.3. *These were inhabited places. People were involved. Springfield cursus, Essex, from a watercolour by Frank Gardiner, reproduced on a postcard.*



### 11.5. Biographies

The cursus story is an ongoing story.

*The first visit to a place, the knowledge that it is special, that it has always been special, and that it is always going to be. The first cut, turning over earth, building up a bank. Or the hole dug out, and a large timber post erected. The planning and surveying, and the discussions, and then using it. Perhaps these cursus sites even produced results for its users, served the purposes of people doing their own things. Usage and embellishment and change, more experiences, changing interpretations and appearance.*

The story did not end when the monument became a shaggy, silted, overgrown relic of the ancestors, inconveniently running across decent agricultural land, perhaps even a white elephant. These sites continued to have an impact on peoples' lives, shown through secondary burials at some English sites (Thornborough, Rudston A) or the construction of later burial monuments within the enclosure (Aston-upon-Trent, Stonehenge Greater, Old Montrose, Blairhall, perhaps Holywood 1). Iron Age field systems respect the Dorset cursus. The same prime lowland locations which these sites sat on were re-built upon by the Romans (Trailflat, Fourmerkland, Inchtuthil, Tullichettle) and there is an interesting overlap and parallel relationship between camp and cursus at Gallaberry.

As these places faded into distant memories, through the millennia, they were perhaps walked across, the slumped banks and silted ditches were no longer an imposing physical barrier, and the timber posts long gone. The few earthwork sites recorded by the Antiquarians were supposed to be Roman and new meanings and interpretations all over again. Then archaeologists came along and brought these ancient places back to life, moved within them, re-opened the full ditches, measured and plotted. We inhabit them again, we know they are there. Monuments have biographies (Holtorf 1998; see figure 11.2).



It is through our being-in-the-world-as-archaeologists that we revive these special places and we can do more than cut holes in them and list the results. Why should we not use our imagination and our experiences at these places to think about what they could have meant in the past? Is it wrong to think, too, about what they mean to us? It is special to think that I am as much a part of the Cleaven Dyke, or Holywood, or Milton of Rattray, or Balneaves, or Eskdalemuir, or Drybridge, Broich, Kilmany, as those who witnessed these enclosure in their prime, or who were there before the monument was ever conceived of. Archaeologists are part of the story of these places and have a responsibility to think about them now, the past in the present.

Phenomenology is not easy, not a party trick. I do not enter the field or pick up a trowel or pen and simultaneously don a 'phenomenology hat'. It is a thoughtful, but physically involving way of doing things, which allows for multiple but not endless interpretations, and carries a degree of responsibility and accountability.

*We are involved in the world, and involved in the archaeology. Archaeology is part of the world, part of the past, part of the present, and the future. The monument is now part of us, and we are part of it.*



**APPENDICES**



Appendix I

Gazetteer of *cursus* monuments and bank barrow in Scotland.

The following list of sites concentrates mostly on the details of these sites that did not appear in chapter 3. This includes full grid references, the NMRS and local SMR numbers (if any), scheduled status, published references of note (those which either have brought attention to the site and / or have added some previously unknown information about it), and any other information I think is relevant, like nearby or associated monuments. Some aerial photographs are not readily available (for instance those belonging to Aberdeenshire SMR are rarely developed beyond contact print stage). Therefore not all information is available for all sites.

Much of this information has been collated by myself over the past five years, borrowing much from my initial dissertation (Brophy 1995). Final details, including full scheduling information, were gathered by Sam McKeand as part of the *Cursus Environs: Britain and Beyond Project*, and this information will be added to the National Database of Cursus Monuments being compiled by the end of 2000. The site numbers given to each are my proposed numbering for the Scottish sites.

<i>Explanation of field terms.</i>	
S01	Cursus Environs database number
Name	The name of the site according to the NMRS. Alternative names of note are added in the notes field.
District	New Scottish District Council areas (from 1996)
NGR	Grid reference up to eight figures if possible
NMRS	National Monuments Record of Scotland number. This can be searched on in the RCAHMS online database, CANMORE-web ( <a href="http://www.rcahms.gov.uk">www.rcahms.gov.uk</a> )
Survival	Level of survival, as either cropmark, or earthwork
-defined	Form of boundaries. Ditch, pit or post
Dimensions	Visible extent of site, with length given before width
Orientation	Alignment of the site
Terminals	Number visible, and shapes
Notes	Notes of any excavations or other archaeological investigation undertaken relevant to the site, or more general observations.
References	Substantial contributions only



## Appendices

<b>S01</b>	<b>MAINS OF STRUTHERS</b>
District	Moray
NGR	NJ 084 607
NMRS	NJ 06 SE 33 (NJ 06 SE 34 in GSMR)
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	Unknown
Orientation	Unknown
Terminals	None visible
Notes	Only photographed June 1996
References	-
<b>S02</b>	<b>ORCHARDFIELD</b>
District	Moray
NGR	NJ 163 662
NMRS	NJ 16 NE 46 (NJ 16 NE 47 in GSMR)
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	Unknown
Orientation	Unknown
Terminals	None visible
Notes	Only photographed June 1996
References	-
<b>S03</b>	<b>MUIRTON</b>
District	Moray
NGR	NJ 26 NW 59 (NJ 26 NW 53 in GSMR)
NMRS	NJ 223 681
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	100m+ x 15m
Orientation	SW-NE
Terminals	None visible. Large pit in each open 'end'.
Notes	-
References	Brophy 1998a
<b>S04</b>	<b>MILL OF FINTRAY</b>
District	Aberdeenshire
NGR	NJ 8357 1635
NMRS	NJ 81 NW 54 (NJ 81 NW 42 in GSMR)
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch- and Pit-
Dimensions	150m x 20m
Orientation	NW - SE
Terminals	Both visible, square
Notes	3 internal divisions, 4 'enclosures' (E if pit-defined, rest ditch-defined); widens towards W end.
References	Brophy 1998a, 1999b; Shepherd & Greig 1996.



<b>S05</b>	<b>MAINS OF SPRINGHILL</b>
District	Aberdeenshire
NGR	NK 1040 4170
NMRS	NK 14 SW 7 (also GSMR No.)
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	170m x 20m
Orientation	E-W
Terminals	Both visible, square
Notes	Possibly 1 internal division
References	Brophy 1999b
<b>S06</b>	<b>BLAIRHALL</b>
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NO 1160 2800
NMRS	NO 12 NW 43
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	190m x 20 - 25m
Orientation	ENE - WSW
Terminals	Both visible, square
Notes	Possibly two internal divisions, and at least one causeway; widens towards W end, beyond internal division 75m from W end; ring ditches in, on ditches, and outwith cursus.
References	Brophy 1995 No. 13; Brophy 1998a, 1999b; King 1992; RCAHMS 1994: 13, 26, 28, 38.
<b>S07</b>	<b>THE CLEAVEN DYKE</b>
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NO 1754 3976 to NO 1540 4096
NMRS	NO 14 SE 80 and NO 13 NE 89
Survival	Earthwork and cropmark
-Defined	Ditch- with single central mound
Dimensions	c. 2170m x 45 - 51m; central mound 1 - 2m high with average width 9m (max 16m); wide shallow ditch.
Orientation	SE - NW
Terminals	NW terminal - ditches stop short of round mound at this end, not continuing around it. Terminal marked by massive round mound; SE terminal unclear. Ditches and mound appear to have died out without a terminal ditch.
Notes 1	Built in series of segments, in five distinct sections, each with major break between them; probably built towards the SE.



Appendices

Notes 2	Excavated several times - Abercromby in 1901; Richmond in 1939; Adamson in 1975; Barclay & Maxwell 1993, 1995 (The Cleaven Dyke Project, involving geophysics, environmental sampling etc.)
References	Abercromby <i>et al</i> 1902; Adamson & Gallagher 1986; Barclay & Maxwell 1993, 1995, 1996, 1998; Barclay <i>et al</i> 1995; Brophy 1995 No. 15; Maxwell 1983a; McOmie 1784; Pennant 1776; RCAHMS 1994: 5, 13, 24 - 28, 30, 40, 84; Richmond 1940; Sharpe 1996.

S08	MAINS OF GOURDIE
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NO 1201 4189
NMRS	NO 14 SW 18
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	225m x 10 - 26m
Orientation	N - S
Terminals	No terminals visible
Notes	Very irregular E lateral ditch, straight W ditch - almost meet at S extent; hengiform enclosure 20m to W.
References	Brophy 1998a

S09	MILTON OF RATTRAY
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NO 197 447
NMRS	NO 14 SE 82
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Series of shallow elongate pits
Dimensions	80 - 120m x 18m
Orientation	E - W
Terminals	Neither visible
Notes 1	Possible third pit alignment, parallel to N lateral alignment.
Notes 2	Brophy, Baines and MacKeand in 1997, 1998
References	Brophy 1995 No. 19; Brophy 1998a, 1999b; Brophy & Baines 1997; Baines <i>et al</i> 1998, forthcoming; RCAHMS 1994, 28.



## Appendices

<b>S10</b>	<b>KILMANY</b>
District	Fife
NGR	NO 3973 2265
NMRS	NO 32 SE 49
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	160m x 20m
Orientation	E - W
Terminals	Both rounded
Notes	Narrow rectilinear enclosure, possible bank barrow?; ring-ditch adjacent to E terminal
References	Brophy 1998a, 1999b
<b>S11</b>	<b>CARMICHAEL COTTAGES</b>
District	City of Dundee
NGR	NO 303 310
NMRS	NO 33 SW 50
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	c450m x 60m
Orientation	ENE - WSW
Terminals	One visible, square (or could be internal division?)
Notes	Stretch of double lateral ditch on S side of cursus; ring-ditch within cursus
References	Armit 1995; Brophy 1998a, 1999b
<b>S12</b>	<b>STAR INN FARM (Greystanes Lodge)</b>
District	City of Dundee
NGR	NO 341 309
NMRS	NO 33 SW 77
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	85 (- 135m?) x at least 20m
Orientation	ENE - WSW
Terminals	W only visible, rounded and 'flattened'
Notes	Pit lines irregular; few ring ditches within cursus or on boundaries
References	Brophy 1998a, 1999b



<b>S13</b>	<b>LOCH OF LIFF</b>
District	Angus
NGR	NO 3332 3392
NMRS	NO 33SW 83
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	150m x 25m
Orientation	NW-SE
Terminals	None visible
Notes	Sides 'bow' outwards
References	-
<b>S14</b>	<b>KINALTY</b>
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NO 3562 5122
NMRS	NO 35 SE 32
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	180m x 25m
Orientation	N - S
Terminals	S only visible, rounded but meets rest of enclosure at angle.
Notes	Few breaks in pit lines; internal division 125m from S terminal; lateral ditches curve inwards to meet this
References	Brophy 1995 No. 18, 1998a, 1999b; RCAHMS 1983, No. 258.
<b>S15</b>	<b>WOODHILL</b>
District	Angus
NGR	NO 5162 3466
NMRS	NO 53 SW 45
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	150m x 45m
Orientation	SW - NE
Terminals	SE only visible, rounded
Notes	1 internal division near SE terminal - it is fairly rounded, and looks like an 'extension'
References	Brophy 1995 No. 21; 1998a.



## Appendices

<b>S16</b>	<b>MILTON (OF GUTHRIE)</b>
District	Angus
NGR	NO 590 500
NMRS	NO 55 SE 18
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	600m x 25m
Orientation	ENE - WSW
Terminals	Both square
Notes	Three internal divisions, all straight, dividing up site into 4 enclosures of 105 to 185m x 25m; initially thought to be two individual cursus sites (Milton 1 and 2)
References	Brophy 1995 Nos. 9 and 10; 1998a, 1999b
<b>S17</b>	<b>BALNEAVES COTTAGE</b>
District	Angus
NGR	NO 605 494
NMRS	NO 64 NW 27
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	500m x 25m
Orientation	NE - SW
Terminals	NE visible, square and at a slightly off-set angle
Notes	1 internal division, 100m from NE terminal; area N of it slightly wider
References	Brophy 1995 No. 8; 1998a, 1999b; Maxwell 1979; RCAHMS 1978 No. 158; Barclay in Kendrick 1995; Kinnes 1985.
<b>S18</b>	<b>DOUGLASMUIR</b>
District	Angus
NGR	NO 617 481
NMRS	NO 64 NW 38
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Timber posts
Dimensions	65m x 20m
Orientation	N - S
Terminals	Both square
Notes 1	1 internal division (E - W), dividing enclosure in half; irregular sides (segmented appearance)
Notes 2	Kendrick in 1979 - 80
References	Brophy 1995 No. 11, 1998a, 1999b; Cowie 1993; Kendrick 1995; RCAHMS 1978, 15, 17, 21.



## Appendices

<b>S19</b>	<b>NEWBARNS</b>
District	Angus
NGR	NO 688 493
NMRS	NO 64 NE 48
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	Unknown
Orientation	Unknown
Terminals	None visible
Notes	Parallel pit alignment?
References	Brophy 1998a
<b>S20</b>	<b>OLD MONTROSE (Powis / Maryton)</b>
District	Angus
NGR	NO 661 571 to 667 569
NMRS	NO 65 NE 36
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	600m x 80-100m
Orientation	ENE - WSW
Terminals	ENE straight but off-set from right-angle; WSW overall rounded, constructed from short straight stretches
Notes 1	One internal division, 140m from WSW terminal with causeway in centre
Notes 2	Lithics found in general area by Sherriff (1980) and Brophy & Stuart (1997-8)
References	Brophy 1995 No. 20; 1998a, 1999b; RCAHMS 1978 No. 200; Sherriff 1981; Brophy & Stuart 1997; Stuart 1998; Loveday 1985.
<b>S21</b>	<b>INCHBARE 1</b>
District	Angus
NGR	NO 6090 6555
NMRS	NO 66 NW 41
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	300m x 20m
Orientation	SW - NE
Terminals	SW only visible, square
Notes	One further pit line parallel to S; NE end partially destroyed by pipeline laying
References	Brophy 1995 No. 16; 1998a, 1999b; RCAHMS 1983 No. 256; St. Joseph 1976.



## Appendices

<b>S22</b>	<b>INCHBARE 2</b>
District	Angus
NGR	NO 6068 6579
NMRS	NO 66 NW 50
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	250m x 20m
Orientation	SW - NE
Terminals	Neither visible
Notes	4 or 5 parallel pit lines
References	Brophy 1995 No. 17; 1998a, 1999b; RCAHMS 1983 No. 257.

<b>S23</b>	<b>PURLIEKNOWE</b>
District	Aberdeenshire
NGR	NO 854 780
NMRS	NO 87 NE 44
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	Unknown
Orientation	NW-SE
Terminals	None visible
Notes	Parallel pair of pit alignments
References	Brophy 1999; Shepherd & Greig 1996

<b>S24</b>	<b>TULLICHETTLE</b>
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NN 773 204
NMRS	Not in NMRS yet
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	150m+ x 30m
Orientation	NE-SW
Terminals	None visible
Notes	Very irregular sides
References	-

<b>S25</b>	<b>CRAGGISH HOUSE</b>
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NN 763 210
NMRS	Not in NMRS yet
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	80m+ x 15m
Orientation	WSW-ENE
Terminals	None visible
Notes	Irregular sides
References	-



## Appendices

<b>S26</b>	<b>BENNYBEG (Muthill)</b>
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NO 8654 1903
NMRS	NO 81 NE 44
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	110m x 30m
Orientation	NNE - SSW
Terminals	Both square
Notes	'Horns' protruding from NNE terminal which may be the sides of a U-shaped enclosure
References	Brophy 1995 No. 12; 1998a, 1999b; Darvill 1996, 183.

<b>S27</b>	<b>BROICH</b>
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NN 866 202
NMRS	NN 82 SE 69
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	c900m x 100m
Orientation	NNE - SSW
Terminals	Neither visible
Notes	Pit-circle sits within causeway in W ditch; large circular enclosure intersects E ditch; W ditch runs through site of Crieff Barrow
References	Brophy 1995 No. 14; 1998a, 1999b; Childe 1946 (Crieff Barrow)

<b>S28</b>	<b>DUNADD</b>
District	Argyll and Bute
NGR	NR 845 933
NMRS	Not in NMRS yet
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	at least 150m x 10-15m
Orientation	NW - SE
Terminals	NW only visible, rounded
Notes	Narrows towards terminal
References	Campbell 1996.



<b>S29</b>	<b>UPPER LARGIE</b>
District	Argyll and Bute
NGR	NR 832 993
NMRS	Not in NMRS yet
Survival	Uncovered by excavation
-Defined	Timber post
Dimensions	50m+ x 45m
Orientation	N-S
Terminals	S only visible. Rounded but slightly flattened.
Notes	Excavated by Terry (Scotia Archaeology Ltd) in 1997
References	Terry 1997, 1998.
<b>S30</b>	<b>DRYBRIDGE</b>
District	North Ayrshire
NGR	NS 3582 3685
NMRS	NS 33 NE 44
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	at least 250m x 60m
Orientation	NW - SE
Terminals	Neither visible
Notes	Possible internal division; nearby hengiform enclosures
References	Brophy 1999b, forthcoming a and b; MacNeill 1976 (lithic scatters)
<b>S31</b>	<b>BLAIRBETH</b>
District	South Lanarkshire
NGR	NS 622 589
NMRS	Not in NMRS yet
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	165m x 16m
Orientation	E - W
Terminals	Both rounded
Notes	Narrow rectilinear enclosure, very similar to Kilmany
References	Topen 1995, 20-21, 1996.



Appendices

<b>S32</b>	<b>BANNOCKBURN 1</b>
District	Stirling
NGR	NS 8170 9011
NMRS	NS 89 SW 22
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Multi-phase pits
Dimensions	at least 30m x 2(3?)5m
Orientation	ENE - WSW
Terminals	WSW only visible, rounded
Notes 1	Defined by series of pits showing three phases; segmented appearance; 10m from Bannockburn 2
Notes 2	Excavated by Nick Tavener in 1984-5. (Excavation report written by Rideout).
References	Brophy 1995 No. 1; 1999b; Rideout 1997; Tavener 1987
<b>S33</b>	<b>BANNOCKBURN 2</b>
District	Stirling
NGR	NS 8184 9024
NMRS	NS 89 SW 24
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Timber posts
Dimensions	at least 85m x 27m
Orientation	ENE - WSW
Terminals	ENE only visible, square
Notes 1	Segmented appearance
Notes 2	Excavated by Nick Tavener in 1984-5. (Excavation report written by Rideout).
References	Brophy 1995 No.1; 1999b; Rideout 1997; Tavener 1987
<b>S34</b>	<b>WEST LINDSAYLANDS</b>
District	South Lanarkshire
NGR	NT 015 365
NMRS	NT 03 NW 94
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	Unknown
Orientation	NE-SW
Terminals	None visible
Notes	-
References	Brophy 1999b



<b>S35</b>	<b>MONKTONHALL</b>
District	City of Edinburgh
NGR	NT 3505 7100
NMRS	NT 37 SE 49
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	700m x 135-170m
Orientation	NNE - SSW
Terminals	NNE only visible, rounded but only slight curve
Notes 1	Terminal and W ditches double, E quadruple
Notes 2	Excavated by Bill Hanson in 1984
References	Brophy 1999b; Hanson 1984

<b>S36</b>	<b>KINGSLAW</b>
District	East Lothian
NGR	NT 417 725
NMRS	NT 47 SW 44
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	750m x 50m
Orientation	E - W
Terminals	Neither visible
Notes	-
References	Brophy 1999b

<b>S37</b>	<b>PRESTON MAINS</b>
District	East Lothian
NGR	NT 599 781
NMRS	NT57NE 29
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	310m x 90m
Orientation	WSW-ENE
Terminals	ENE terminal visible. Rounded.
Notes	May be another part of Drylawhill cursus (S38)
References	-



## Appendices

<b>S38</b>	<b>DRYLAWHILL</b>
District	East Lothian
NGR	NT 5907 7790
NMRS	NT 57 NE 67
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	300m x 90m
Orientation	WSW - ENE
Terminals	Neither visible
Notes 1	Possible breaks in ditches, which are irregular; possible internal division.
Notes 2	May extend further to the E at Preston Mains (S37)
References	Armit 1993; Brophy 1995 No. 7; 1999b
<b>S39</b>	<b>SPRINGBANK</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 043 610
NMRS	NX 06 SW 23
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	90m x 15m
Orientation	E-W
Terminals	W visible. Narrows and meets a circular enclosure
Notes	Sinuous; circular enclosure at one end; bank barrow?
References	-
<b>S40</b>	<b>FOX PLANTATION</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 114 571
NMRS	NX15NW 81
Survival	Uncovered during rescue excavation
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	Two pit-alignments up to 25m long and 30m apart (limited by the excavation trenches)
Orientation	NNW-SSE
Terminals	-
Notes	Excavated by MacGregor (GUARD) in 1994
References	MacGregor <i>et al</i> 1996



## Appendices

<b>S41</b>	<b>KIRKLAND STATION</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 8094 8993
NMRS	NX 88 NW 106
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	200m x 70m
Orientation	NNW-SSE
Terminals	1 round terminal
Notes	-
References	Brophy 1999b
<b>S42</b>	<b>TIBBERS</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 8640 9658
NMRS	NX 89 NE 89
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	70m+ x 45m
Orientation	N-S
Terminals	1 square terminal
Notes	-
References	-
<b>S43</b>	<b>REDBANK</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 950 579
NMRS	NX 95 NE 26
Survival	Cropmark; possible low earthwork mound
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	150m x 25m
Orientation	NW - SE
Terminals	Possibly rounded terminal at NW end
Notes	Sinuuous; possible 'bank barrow'?
References	Brophy 1999b; Jones 1979; RCAHMS 1997; Truckell 1984 No. 57.
<b>S44</b>	<b>CAVENS</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 972 584
NMRS	NX 95 NE 20
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	Unknown
Orientation	Due N - S
Terminals	One visible, U-shaped?
Notes	-
References	Brophy 1995 No. 2; Jones 1979; Truckell 1984 No. 40.



<b>S45</b>	<b>CURRIESTANES</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 9602 7516
NMRS	NX 97 NE 85
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	300m x 100m
Orientation	E - W
Terminals	E terminal only visible, rounded
Notes	'Causeway' in centre of terminal
References	Brophy 1995 No. 3; 1999b; RCAHMS 1997
<b>S46</b>	<b>HOLYWOOD 1 (Newbridge)</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 9490 7965
NMRS	NX 97 NW 23
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditches, up to 1.2m deep and 4-6m across, with possible re-cut; steep sided
Dimensions	290m x 30m
Orientation	SSE - NNW
Terminals	Both square
Notes 1	At least five visible causeways (one shown to be real by excavation); internal features excavated include a series of pits and post-holes and a ring-ditch; other internal cropmarks include a rectilinear enclosure and possible ring-ditch; possible aligns on Irongray Road henge to south; across valley from 12 Apostles stone circle
Notes 2	Excavated by Thomas in 1997
References	Brophy 1995 No. 5; 1999b; Burl 1995 No. 143 (12 Apostles and cursus); Jones 1979; Loveday 1985; Maynard 1993 (henge); RCAHMS 1997; Thomas 1999.
<b>S47</b>	<b>FOURMERKLAND</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 9150 8006
NMRS	NX 98 SW 67
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Pit-
Dimensions	50m x 18m
Orientation	NNE - SSW
Terminals	NNE visible, square
Notes	One side bisects a ring-ditch
References	Brophy 1995; Loveday 1985; RCAHMS 1997



<b>S48</b>	<b>HOLYWOOD 2</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 9503 7985
NMRS	NX 98 SE 42
Survival	Cropmark, although may roughly be visible on ground
-Defined	Ditches, up to 1.1m deep and 4-5m across, steep sided, re-cut
Dimensions	380m x 30m
Orientation	SSW - NNE
Terminals	Both rounded
Notes 1	Two causeways (one shown to be real by excavation); change in direction by 5° in woodland; internal lines of post-holes follow interior of ditch; aligns on Gallaberry cursus (to N) and Holywood 2 cursus and 12 Apostles stone circle (to S)
Notes 2	Fieldwalking in 1995 produced no finds (see chapter 6)
Excavation	Excavated by Thomas in 1997
References	Brophy 1995 No. 6; 1999b; Burl 1995 No. 143 (12 Apostles); Loveday 1985; RCAHMS 1997; Thomas 1999.

<b>S49</b>	<b>GALLABERRY</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 9645 8278
NMRS	NX 98 SE 51
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	50m wide, at least few hundred m long
Orientation	SSW-NNE
Terminals	None visible
Notes	Geophysical survey undertaken in 1970 by Williams and Anderson -results since lost
References	Brophy 1999b; RCAHMS 1997; Williams and Anderson 1971; Yates 1984 Fig. 27

<b>S50</b>	<b>HOLM</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NX 9596 8038
NMRS	NX 98 SE 86
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Timber posts
Dimensions	90m x 12m
Orientation	NW - SE
Terminals	SE only visible, rounded



**Appendices**

<b>Notes 1</b>	<b>Lies amidst series of pit alignments and circles;</b>
	<b>excavation has shown it to be a triple post-alignment</b>
<b>Notes 2</b>	<b>Excavated by Thomas in 1998</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>Brophy 1995 No. 4; 1997; RCAHMS 1997; Thomas 1998a; Thomas &amp; Leivers 1998.</b>

<b>S51</b>	<b>TRAILFLAT</b>
<b>District</b>	<b>Dumfries and Galloway</b>
<b>NGR</b>	<b>NY 0488 8500</b>
<b>NMRS</b>	<b>NY 08 NW 24</b>
<b>Survival</b>	<b>Cropmark</b>
<b>-Defined</b>	<b>Pit-</b>
<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>50m x 20m</b>
<b>Orientation</b>	<b>NNW-SSE</b>
<b>Terminals</b>	<b>Both rounded</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>1 internal division</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>RCAHMS 1997</b>

<b>S52</b>	<b>LOCHBROW</b>
<b>District</b>	<b>Dumfries and Galloway</b>
<b>NGR</b>	<b>NY 0948 8931</b>
<b>NMRS</b>	<b>NY 08 NE 34</b>
<b>Survival</b>	<b>Cropmark</b>
<b>-Defined</b>	<b>Pit-</b>
<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>200m x 20m</b>
<b>Orientation</b>	<b>S - N</b>
<b>Terminals</b>	<b>Neither visible</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>Internal division 100-150m from N extent</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>Brophy 1999b; RCAHMS 1997</b>

<b>S53</b>	<b>TOM'S KNOWE (Eskdalemuir)</b>
<b>District</b>	<b>Dumfries and Galloway</b>
<b>NGR</b>	<b>NY 2501 9798</b>
<b>NMRS</b>	<b>NY 29 NE 8</b>
<b>Survival</b>	<b>Earthwork</b>
<b>-Defined</b>	<b>Ditches closely flanking central mound</b>
<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>At least 255m long; 20m wide; central mound 5.5m wide and 0.5m high; ditches 3.5m wide</b>
<b>Orientation</b>	<b>NNE - SSW</b>
<b>Terminals</b>	<b>Rounded mound (S terminal), 10.5m x 8m, 1.5m high; initially thought to be a chambered tomb; ditch continues around it</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>May form one end of larger 'bank barrow' - see S54</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>Brophy 1998a, 1999b; RCAHMS 1992, 1997; Yates 1984 No. ED5</b>



<b>S54</b>	<b>LAMB KNOWE (Eskdalemuir)</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NY 2501 9935
NMRS	NY 29 NE 75
Survival	Earthwork
-Defined	Ditches closely flanking central mound
Dimensions	650m x 20m; central mound 6.2m wide, 0.5m high; ditches 3.8m wide, 0.3m deep
Orientation	SSW - NNE
Terminals	Oval barrow-like terminal (N); 9.7m x 8m; 1.5m high; ditch continues around it
Notes	May form one end of larger 'bank barrow' - see S53
References	Brophy 1998a 1999b; RCAHMS 1992, 1997
<b>S55</b>	<b>CADGILL</b>
District	Dumfries and Galloway
NGR	NY 3180 7454
NMRS	NY 37 SW 18
Survival	Cropmark
-Defined	Ditch-
Dimensions	180m x 17m
Orientation	WNW - ESE
Terminals	ESE visible, straight but angular
Notes	Originally interpreted as a shelter belt
References	RCAHMS 1997
<b>S56</b>	<b>AUCHENLAICH</b>
District	Perthshire and Kinross
NGR	NN 6496 0727
NMRS	NN60NW 4
Survival	Standing monument
-Defined	Megalithic
Dimensions	323m x 11-15m
Orientation	NNW-SSE
Terminals	Long mound built onto a trapezoidal chambered cairn (SSE)
Notes	Change of alignment towards NNW end
References	Foster & Stevenston in Brophy 1998a



## Appendix II

### Context descriptions for Milton of Rattray excavations, 1997-8.

(001) Topsoil

(002) Natural

(003) Not used

(004) Fill of cut 005 ('pit' F1). A loamy yellowish brown soil (turfy compactness in structure). No charcoal or other staining. Inclusions of small sub-angular and sub-circular stones of approximately 1x1cm to 10x10cm. Contains a few large cobbles of up to 20cm in length. Only fill in (005).

(005) Cut. Linear scoop / shallow pit, 2.6m in length at the top of the cut and 1.6m long at the base. Concave, gently sloped, stone lined sides with an undulating bottom. .5m wide at the bottom, 1.2m wide at the top.

(006) Topsoil

(007) Natural

(008) Topsoil

(009) Natural

(010) Layer or spread? Red/brown clay/silt with frequent small to medium stone inclusions and a few large pebbles. Contains flecks of burnt material and stone. Spread across a scoop, up to 10cm deep, and similar in appearance to (003). Sherds of modern pottery found within this spread.

(011) Not used

(012) Cut of 'pit' F2. Approximately 2.3m long and 1.3m wide, with a maximum depth of 25cm. Concave sides. Cut is contemporary to (013).

(013) Cut of linear feature running between (005) and (012). It is concave and very shallow (between 2cm and 12cm deep) with a maximum width of 40cm. It has no significant features within it. The sides are shallow and the bottom level. Cut is contemporary to (014).

(014) Cut of 'pit' F3. It is sub-circular shape in shape. It is approximately 2.2m in length and 1.3m wide, with a maximum depth of 35cm. Its sides are concave.



(015) Cut of linear feature. Ephemeral shallow cut with a depth of about 10cm and maximum width of 35cm.

(016) Cut of linear feature. Ephemeral shallow cut with a depth of about 11cm and maximum width of 42cm.

(017) Fill of 'pit' F2 (cut (012)). Mid-brown sandy-clay mix with inclusions of large stones shaped round to sub-rectangular (up to 25x25cm in a few cases). Inclusions of modern pottery. Only fill of cut 012.

(018) Fill of linear feature (cut (013)). Lightly compacted mid-light brown mix of sand/gravel/clay with 5% inclusions of gravel and small stones.

(019) Top fill of 'pit' F3 (cut (014)). Dark brown clay/sand mix. Unique to this feature of those excavated. A mixture of (022) and darker soils?

(020) Fill of linear feature (cut (015)). Mid-brown sandy-clay fill with very infrequent inclusions.

(021) Fill of linear feature (cut (016)). Yellow brown sandy-clay fill with very infrequent inclusions.

(022) Lower fill of pit 'F3' (cut (014)). Mid-brown clay/sand mix. Similar to contents of the other pits in compaction and mix. Contains one large stone 25cm by 30cm in size and a few smaller stones.

(023) Cut of small feature to the south of the alignment. Oval shape in plan, measuring 20x26cm and 7cm deep. Sharp break of slope at bottom of steep sides, and flat bottomed. Possibly a truncated feature?

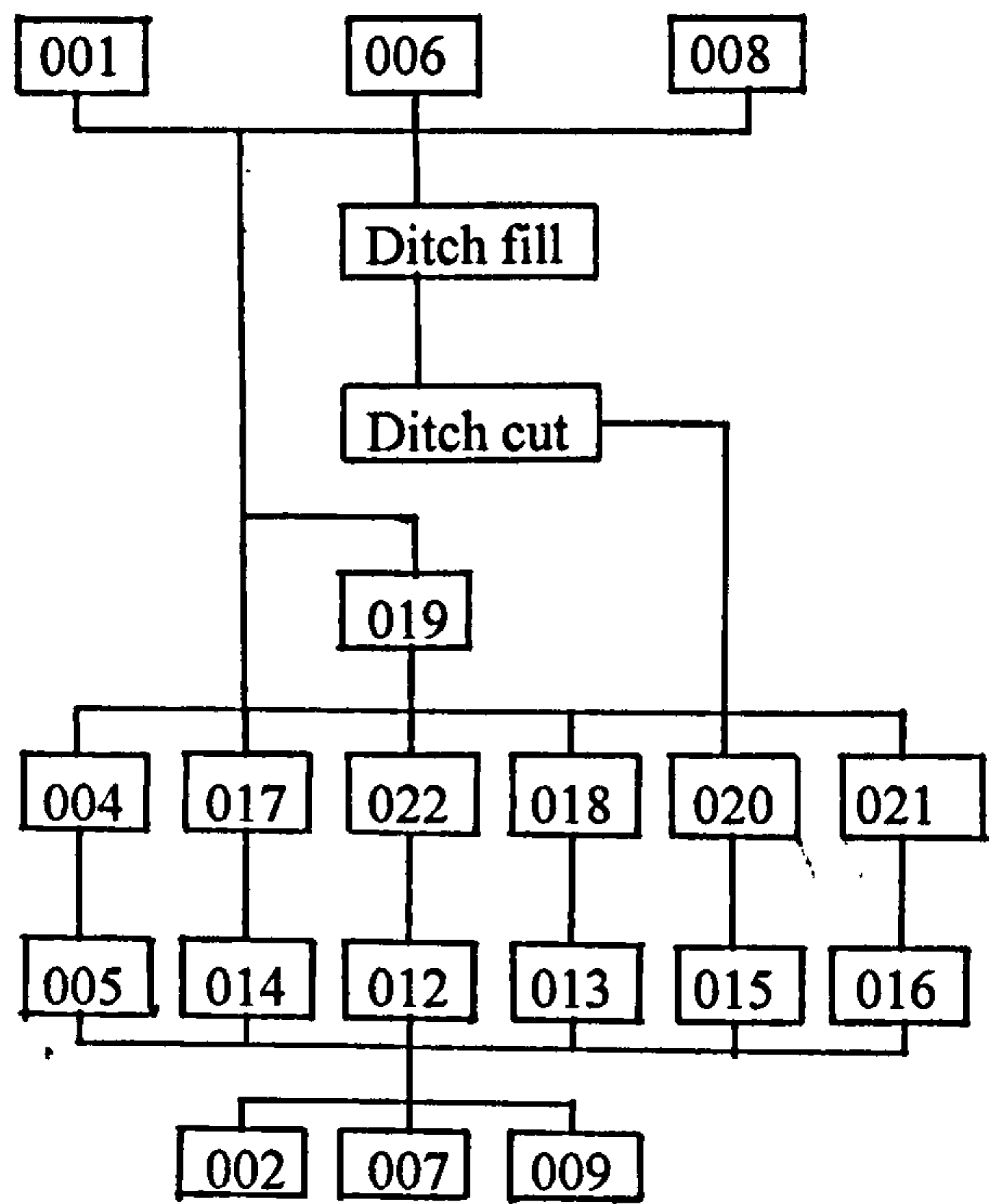
(024) Fill of feature with cut (023). Fairly compact dark brown soily texture. Very few inclusions.



List of features

No.	Feature description	Cut context	Fill context
F1	Pit	005	004
F2	Pit	012	017
F3	Pit	014	022, 019
F4	Ditch	<i>Ditch cut</i>	Ditch fill
F5	Slot	013	018
F6	Slot	015, 016	020, 021
F7	Post-hole (poss)	023	024
F8	Pit (unexcavated)	NA	NA
F9	Pit (unexcavated)	NA	NA
F10	Slot (unexcavated)	NA	NA

Harris Matrix





BIBLIOGRAPHY

<b>List of abbreviations used.</b>	
<i>Antiq. J.</i>	Antiquaries Journal
<i>Archaeol. J.</i>	Archaeological Journal
<i>Camb. Archaeol. J.</i>	Cambridge Archaeological Journal
<i>Glasgow Archaeol. J.</i>	Glasgow Archaeological Journal
<i>Proc. Dor. Nat. Hist. &amp; Arch. Soc.</i>	Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society
<i>Proc. Prehist. Soc</i>	Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society
<i>Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl</i>	Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
<i>Yorks. Archaeol. J.</i>	Yorkshire Archaeological Journal
<i>Wilt. Arch. Nat. Hist. Mag</i>	Wiltshire Archaeology and Natural History Magazine

Abercromby J, Ross T & Anderson J; 1902; Account of the excavations of the Roman Station, Inchtuthil, Perthshire; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 36, 182 - 245.

Aberdeen Archaeological Surveys; 1977; Aerial reconnaissance: Gas pipeline corridor; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1977, 3.

Abernethy D; 1995; Ballymeanoch; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1995, 63-4.

Adams WY; 1988; Archaeological classification: theory *versus* practice; *Antiquity* 62, 40-56.

Adams WY & Adams EW; 1991; *Archaeological typology and practical reality: a dialectical approach to artefact classification and sorting*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Adamson HC; 1975; Cleaven Dyke; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1975, 42.

Adamson HC & Gallagher DB; 1986; Excavations at the Cleaven Dyke, Perthshire, 1975; *Glasgow Archaeol. J.* 8, 63 - 68.

Armit, I; 1990; Epilogue: the Atlantic Scottish Iron Age; in Armit I (Ed); 1990; *Beyond the Brochs: changing perspectives on the later Iron Age in Atlantic Scotland*; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; 194-210.

Armit, I; 1993; Drylawhill, East Lothian - cursus and associated features; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1993, 57.

Armit, I; 1995; Carmichael Cottages - possible cursus; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1995, 97.

Armit I & Finlayson B; 1992; Hunter-gatherers transformed: the transition to agriculture in northern and western Europe; *Antiquity* 66, 664-76.

Armit, I; 1998; *Scotland's hidden history*; Stroud: Tempus.



Ashbee, P; 1970; *The earthen long barrow in Britain*; London: JM Dent & Sons Ltd.

Aston, M; 1992; *Interpreting the landscape*; London: Batsford.

Atkinson, RJC; 1955; The Dorset Cursus; *Antiquity* 29, 4-9.

Atkinson RJC, Piggott CM & Sanders NK; 1951; *Excavations at Dorchester, Oxon.*; Oxford: Ashmolean Museum.

Avery M; 1982; The Neolithic causewayed enclosure, Abingdon; in Case & Whittle 1982, 10-24.

Baines AC, Brophy K & MacKeand S; 1998; *Excavation at a possible pit-defined cursus at Milton of Rattray, Blairgowrie, Perthshire, 1998 - Interim report*; Unpublished paper.

Bapty I & Yates T (Eds) 1990; *Archaeology after structuralism*; London: Routledge.

Barclay A & Harding J; 1999a; An introduction to the cursus monuments of Neolithic Britain and Ireland; in Barclay & Harding 1999b, 1-10.

Barclay A & Harding J; 1999b; *Pathways and ceremonies: the cursus monuments of Britain and Ireland*; Oxford: Oxbow.

Barclay A & Hey G; 1999; Cattle, cursus monuments and the river: the development of ritual and domestic landscapes in the Upper Thames valley; in Barclay & Harding 1999, 67-78.

Barclay GJ; 1982; The excavation of two cropmarks at Huntingtower, Perthshire; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 112, 580-3.

Barclay GJ; 1983; Sites of the third millennium bc and to the first millennium ad at North Mains, Strathallan, Perthshire; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 113, 122-281.

Barclay GJ; 1989; Henge monuments: reappraisal or reductionism?; *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 55, 260-2.

Barclay GJ; 1995; What's new in Scottish prehistory?; *Scott. Archaeol. Review* 9, 3 - 14.

Barclay GJ; 1996; Neolithic buildings in Scotland; in Darvill T & Thomas J (Eds); 1996; *Neolithic houses in north-west Europe and beyond*; Oxford: Oxbow; 61-76.

Barclay GJ; 1997; The Neolithic; in Edwards, K & Ralston, I (Eds); *Scotland: Environment and archaeology 8000 BC to AD 1000*; Chichester: John Wiley.

Barclay GJ; 1998; *Farmers, temples and tombs: Scotland in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age*; Edinburgh: Canongate Books.



Barclay GJ and Maxwell GS; 1991; Excavation of a Neolithic long mortuary enclosure within the Roman legionary fortress at Inchtuthil, Perthshire; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 121, 27 - 44.

Barclay GJ & Maxwell GS; 1993; *The Cleaven Dyke project 1993: interim report*; Unpublished paper

Barclay GJ & Maxwell GS; 1995; *The Cleaven Dyke project 1995: interim report*; Unpublished paper

Barclay GJ & Maxwell GS; 1997; Herald Hill: Long barrow; *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* 1997, 62.

Barclay GJ & Maxwell GS; 1998; *The Cleaven Dyke and Littleour: monuments in the Neolithic of Tayside*; Edinburgh: Society of the Antiquaries of Scotland.

Barclay GJ & Maxwell GS; 1999; The Cleaven Dyke: a summary account of survey and excavation, 1993-96; in Barclay & Harding 1999, 98-106.

Barclay GJ, Maxwell GS, Simpson IA and Davidson DA; 1995; The Cleaven Dyke: A Neolithic cursus monument / bank barrow in Tayside Region, Scotland; *Antiquity* 69, 317 - 326.

Barclay GJ & Russell-White CJ; 1991; Excavations in the ceremonial complex of the fourth to second millenium BC at Balfarg / Balbirnie, Glenrothes, Fife; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 123, 43-210.

Barker P; 1993; *Techniques of archaeological excavation*; London: Batsford.

Barnatt J; 1989; *Stone circles of Britain: taxonomic distributional analyses and a catalogue of sites in England, Scotland and Wales*; Oxford: BAR.

Barrett JC; 1988; Fields of discourse: reconstructing a social archaeology; *Critique of Anthropology* 7.3, 5-16.

Barrett JC; 1994; *Fragments from antiquity*; Oxford: Blackwell.

Barrett JC, Bradley R & Green M; 1991; *Landscape, monuments and society: the prehistory of Cranborne Chase*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barrowman C & Stuart E; forthcoming; *Scottish Lithic Scatters Project*.

Bender B; 1992; Theorising landscapes and the prehistoric landscape of Stonehenge; *Man* 27, 735-55.

Bender B (Eds); 1993; *Landscape: politics and perspectives*; Oxford: Berg.

Bender B; 1998; *Stonehenge: making space*; London: Routledge.



Bender B, Hamilton S & Tilley C; 1997; Leskernick: Stone worlds, Alternative narratives, Nested landscapes; *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 63, 147-78.

Bowden M, Bradley R, Gaffney V & Mephram L; 1983; The date of the Dorset cursus; *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 49, 376-9.

Bradley R; 1983; The bank barrows and related monuments of Dorset in light of recent fieldwork; *Proc. Dor. Nat. Hist. & Arch. Soc.* 105, 15-20.

Bradley R; 1991; Monuments and places; in Garwood P, Jennings D, Skeates R & Toms J (Eds); 1991; *Sacred and profane*; Oxford: Oxbow; 135-140.

Bradley R; 1993; *Altering the earth*; Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

Bradley R; 1998; *The significance of monuments*; London: Routledge.

Bradley R & Chambers R; 1988; A new study of the cursus complex at Dorchester-on-Thames; *Oxford Arch. Journal* 7, 271-89.

Bramman J, Butler K, Miller D, Myatt L, Saxon J & Watson G; 1982; *Visits to Ancient Caithness*; Thurso: Caithness Field Club.

Brophy K; 1995; *The landscape archaeology of the Scottish cursus monuments*; Unpublished B.Sc. dissertation, University of Glasgow.

Brophy K; 1998a; The cursus monuments and bank barrows of Tayside and Fife; in Barclay & Maxwell 1998, 92-108.

Brophy K; 1998b; This is not phenomenology (or is it?). Experiencing cursus monuments; *3rd Stone* 30, 7-9.

Brophy K; 1999a; Seeing the cursus as a symbolic river; *British Archaeology* 44, 6-7 (May 1999).

Brophy K; 1999b; The cursus monuments of Scotland; in Barclay & Harding 1999, 120-9.

Brophy K; 2000; Excavations at Milton of Rattray, a possible cursus monument: and a discussion on the pit-defined cursus monuments of Tayside; *Tayside Fife Archaeological Journal* 6

Brophy K; forthcoming a; Water coincidence? Cursus monuments and water; in Ritchie forthcoming.

Brophy K; forthcoming b; Wet Drybridge: a cursus in Ayrshire; in Harding J, Johnston R & Pollard J (Eds); forthcoming; *Northern Pasts*; Oxford: BAR.

Brophy K & Baines AC; 1997; *Excavation at a possible pit-defined cursus at Milton of Rattray, Blairgowrie, Perthshire, 1997 - Interim report*; Unpublished paper.



Brophy K & Fowler C; 1999; *Kaleidoscope stones and the monuments of many colours*; Paper given at the EAA Conference, 1999.

Brophy K & MacGregor G; forthcoming; Monumental phenomenology: a Scottish experience: *Scott. Archaeol. Review*.

Brophy K & Stuart E; 1997; Old Montrose: lithic scatters; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1997, 15.

Buckley D; 1988; Springfield; *Current Archaeology* 10, 6-11.

Burgess C; 1976; Meldon Bridge: a Neolithic defended promontory complex near Peebles; in Burgess & Miket 1976, 151-79.

Burgess C & Miket R (Eds); 1976; *Settlement and economy in the third and second millennia BC*; Oxford: BAR.

Burl A; 1969; Henges: internal structures and regional groups; *Archaeol. J.* 126, 1-28.

Burl A; 1988; *Four-posters: Bronze Age stone circles in Western Europe*; Oxford: BAR.

Burl A; 1993; *From Carnac to Callanish. The prehistoric stone rows and avenues of Britain, Ireland and Brittany*; London: Yale University Press.

Burl A; 1995; *A guide to the stone circles of Britain, Ireland and Brittany*; London: Yale University Press.

Buttimer A; 1996; Geography and Humanism in the late twentieth century; in Douglas *et al* 1996, 837-59.

Campbell E; 1996; Dunadd: ? cursus; *Discovery and excavation Scotland* 1996, 22.

Carter S; 1996; A radiocarbon dated pit-alignment at North Straiton, near Leuchars, Fife; *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal* 2, 45-51.

Carter S and Russell-White CJ; 1993; The investigation of two cropmark sites near Inverness; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 123, 235 - 243.

Catherall PD; 1971; Henges in perspective; *Archaeol. J.* 128, 147-53.

Catherall PD; 1976; Henge monuments: monument or myth?; in Burgess & Miket 1976, 1-9.

Castleden R; 1993; *The making of Stonehenge*; London: Routledge.

Case H; 1982; The linear ditches and southern enclosure, North Stoke; in Case & Whittle 1982, 60-75.



- Case H & Whittle AWR (Ed); 1982; *Settlement patterns in the Oxford region: excavations at the Abingdon causewayed enclosure and other sites*; Oxford / London: Ashmolean Museum / CBA.
- Chadwick A; 1998; Archaeology at the edge of chaos: further towards reflexive excavation methodologies; *Assemblage 3* ([www.shef.ac.uk/assem/3/3chad.htm](http://www.shef.ac.uk/assem/3/3chad.htm)).
- Childe VG; 1946; *Scotland before the Scots*; London: Methuen.
- Christie PM; 1963; The Stonehenge cursus; *Wilt. Arch. Nat. Hist. Mag.* 58, 370-82.
- Clare T; 1986; Towards a reappraisal of henge monuments; *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 52, 281-316.
- Clare T; 1987; Towards a reappraisal of henge monuments: origins, evolutions and heirarchies; *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 53, 457-77.
- Clarke DL; 1968; *Analytical Archaeology*; London: Methuen.
- Clarke DV & Sharples N; 1985; Settlements and subsistence in the third millenium BC; in Renfrew C (Ed); 1985; *The prehistory of Orkney*; Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh; 54-82.
- Cope J; 1998; *The modern antiquarian: a pre-millennial odyssey through megalithic Britain*; London: Thorsons.
- Cosgrove D; 1993; Landscape and myth: Gods and humans; in Bender 1993, 281-305
- Cowie T; 1993; A survey of the Neolithic pottery of eastern and central Scotland; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 123, 13 - 41.
- Crawford OGS; 1935; Rectangular enclosures: a note on Mr. Leeds' paper; *Antiq. J.* 15, 77-8.
- Crawford OGS; 1938; Bank barrows; *Antiquity* 12, 228-32.
- Crawford OGS & Keillor A; 1928; *Wessex from the air*; Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Dames, M; 1996; *The Avebury Cycle*; London: Thames and Hudson.
- Darvill T; 1987; *Prehistoric Britain*; London: Batsford.
- Darvill, T; 1996; *Prehistoric Britain from the air: a study of space, time and society*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Darvill, T; 1997; Neolithic landscapes: identity and definition; in Topping 1997, 1-13.
- Davidson JL & Henshall AS; 1989; *The chambered cairns of Orkney: an inventory of the structures and their contents*; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.



- Davidson JL & Henshall AS; 1991; *The chambered cairns of Caithness: an inventory of the structures and their contents*; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Douglas M; 1966; *Purity and danger*; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Douglas I, Huggett RJ & Robinson ME (Eds); 1996; *Companion encyclopaedia of geography - environment and humankind*; London: Routledge.
- Dreyfus HL; 1991; *Being-in-the-world*; Cambridge, Mas.: MIT Press.
- Dumas A; 1991; *Excursions sur les bords du Rhin*; Paris. Edited by D Fernandez.
- Dymond, DP; 1966; Ritual monuments at Rudston, East Yorkshire, England; *Proc. Pre. Soc.* 32, 86-95.
- Eco U; 1996; *The island of the day before*; London: Minerva.
- Edmonds M; 1999; *Ancestral geographies of the Neolithic*; London: Routledge.
- Fagan BM; 1995; *Time detectives: how archaeologists use technology to recapture the past*; London: Simon & Schuster.
- Foden G; 1998; *The last king of Scotland*; London: Faber & Faber.
- Ford S; 1986; A newly discovered causewayed enclosure at Eton Wick, near Windsor, Berkshire; *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 52, 319-20.
- Foucault M; 1970; *The order of things: an archaeology of the human sciences*; London: Tavistock Publications.
- Fowler C; 1999; *The life and times of a post-hole (or a tale of two post-holes)*; ([www.arch.soton.ac.uk/Research/Dunragit/diary\\_page\\_17.htm](http://www.arch.soton.ac.uk/Research/Dunragit/diary_page_17.htm)).
- Gage J; 1999; Did colours signify? Symbolism in the red; *Camb. Archaeol. J.* 9.1, 110-2.
- Garton D, Howard A & Pearce M; 1996; Late Neolithic human remains from the River Trent, Nottinghamshire; ([www.nottingham.ac.uk/tpau/projects/lang/](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/tpau/projects/lang/)).
- Gibson A; 1994; Exavations at the Sarn-y-Bryn-Caled cursus complex, Welshpool, and the timber circles of Great Britain and Ireland; *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 60, 143-223.
- Gibson, A (Ed); 1989; *Midlands prehistory - some recent and current researches into the prehistory of central England*; Oxford: BAR.
- Gibson A & Loveday R; 1989; Excavations at the cursus monument of Aston upon Trent, Derbyshire; in Gibson 1989, 27-50.
- Gosden T; 1994; *Social being and time*; Oxford: Blackwell.



Gosden Y; 1996; Can we take the Aryan out of Heideggerian?; *Archaeological Dialogues* 3.1, 22-5.

Greenwell W; 1877; *British barrows. A record of the examination of sepulchral mounds in various parts of England*; Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Guilbert G; 1996; Findern is dead. Long live Potlock: The story of a cursus on the Trent gravels; *PAST* 24, 10-2.

Haggarty A; 1991; Machrie Moor, Arran: recent excavations at two stone circles; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scott.* 121, 51-94.

Hammond M, Howarth J & Keats R; 1991; *Understanding phenomenology*; Oxford: Blackwell.

Hanson WS; 1984; *Monktonhall, Inveresk*; Unpublished interim report.

Hanson WS and MacInnes I; 1991; The archaeology of the Scottish lowlands: problems and potential; in Hanson & Slater 1991, 153-66.

Hanson, WS and Slater, EA (Eds); *Scottish archaeology. New perceptions*; Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.

Harding AF & Lee GE; 1987; *Henge monuments and related sites of Great Britain*; Oxford: BAR.

Harding J; 1998; Recent fieldwork at the Neolithic monument complex of Thornborough, North Yorkshire; *Northern Archaeology* 15/16, 27-38.

Harding J; 1999; Pathways to new realms: cursus monuments and symbolic territories; in Barclay & Harding 1999, 30-8.

Hassan FA; 1997; Beyond the surface: comments on Hodder's 'reflexive excavation methodology'; *Antiquity* 71, 1020-5.

Hayes RC & Rutter JD; 1964; *Wade's Causeway - a Roman road in north-east Yorkshire*; Scarborough: Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society Research Report 4.

Hedges JD and Buckley DG; 1981; *Springfield cursus and the cursus problem*; Chelmsford: Essex County Council Occasional Paper No.1.

Heidegger M; 1962; *Being and time*; Oxford: Blackwell. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson.

Hill JN & Evans RK; 1972; A model for classification and typology; in Clarke DL (Ed); 1972; *Models in archaeology*; London: Methuen; 231-73.

Hirsch E & O'Hanlon M (Eds); 1995; *The anthropology of landscape*; Oxford: Clarendon Press.



Hodder I; 1989; Writing archaeology: site reports in context; *Antiquity* 63, 268-74.

Hodder I; 1990; *The domestication of Europe: structure and contingency in Neolithic societies*; Oxford: Blackwell.

Hodder I; 1992; *Theory and practice in archaeology*; London: Routledge.

Hodder I; 1997; 'Always momentary, fluid and flexible': towards a reflexive excavation methodology; *Antiquity* 71, 691-700.

Hodder I; 1999; *The archaeological process*; Oxford: Blackwell.

Hodder I, Shanks M, Alexandri A, Buchli V, Carmen J, Last J & Lucas G (Eds); 1995; *Interpreting archaeology. Finding meaning in the past*; London: Routledge.

Holtorf C; 1998; The life-histories of megaliths in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany); *World Archaeology* 30.1, 23-38.

Houlder C; 1968; The henge monuments at Llandegai; *Antiquity* 42, 216-22.

Husserl E; 1970; *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology*; Evanston: Northwestern University Press. Translated by David Carr.

Husserl E; 1977; *Cartesian meditations*; The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. Translated by Dorion Cairns.

Ihde D; 1971; *Hermeneutic phenomenology: the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*; Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Johnsen H & Olsen B; 1992; Hermeneutics and archaeology: on the philosophy of contextual archaeology; *American Antiquity* 57.3, 419-36.

Jones A; 1997; On the earth-colours of Neolithic death ; *British Archaeology* 22, 6 (March 1997).

Jones A & Bradley R; 1999; The significance of colour in European archaeology; *Camb. Archaeol. J.* 9.1, 112-4.

Jones B; 1979; Aerial reconnaissance - Solway survey: Dumfries and Galloway 1977 to 1979; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1979, 3 - 4.

Jones A & Bradley R; 1999; The significance of colour in European Archaeology; *Camb. Archaeol. J.* 9.1, 112-4.

Karlsson H; 1996; Anthropocentrism re-visited. A contemplative archaeological critique; *Archaeological Dialogues* 3.1, 114-9.

Karlsson H; 1997; *Being and post-processual archaeological thinking: reflections upon post-processual archaeologies and anthropocentrism*; Gothenburg: Göteborg University Department of Archaeology.



Karlsson H; 1998; *Re-thinking archaeology*; Gothenburg: Göteborg University Department of Archaeology.

Kendrick J; 1995; Excavation of a Neolithic enclosure and Iron Age settlement at Douglasmuir, Angus: summary report; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 125, 29 - 67.

Kendrick TD & Hawkes CFC; 1932; *Archaeology in England and Wales, 1914-31*; London.

King MD; 1992; Blairhall: cursus, ring ditches; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1992, 79 - 80.

Kinnes I; 1985; Circumstances not context: the Neolithic of Scotland as seen from the outside; *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.* 115, 15 - 57.

Kinnes I; 1992; *Non-megalithic long barrows and allied structures in the British Neolithic*; London: British Museum.

Kinnes I; 1999; *Longtemps ignorees*: Passyrots linear monuments in northern France; in Barclay & Harding 1999, 148.

Kirk T; forthcoming; Monumentality in Normandy; in Ritchie forthcoming.

Klejn, LS; 1982; *Archaeological typology*; Oxford: BAR; Translated by Penelope Dol.

Knapp AB; 1996; Archaeology without gravity: postmodernism and the past; *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 3.2, 127-58.

Lampeter Archaeological Workshop; 1997; Relativism, objectivity and the politics of the past; *Archaeological Dialogues* 4.2, 164-75.

Langer M; 1989; *Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception. A guide and commentary*; Tallahassee: The Florida State University Press.

Leeds ET; 1934a; Rectangular enclosures of the Bronze Age in the Upper Thames valley; *Antiq. J.* 14, 414-6.

Leeds ET; 1934b; Recent Bronze Age discoveries in Berkshire and Oxfordshire; *Antiq. J.* 14, 262-276.

Lockyer N; 1909; *Stonehenge and the other British stone monuments astronomically considered*; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition; London: MacMillan.

Loveday R; 1985; *Cursuses and related monuments of the British Neolithic*; Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Leicester.

Loveday R; 1989; The Barford ritual complex: further excavations (1972) and a regional perspective; in Gibson A, 1989.



Loveday R; 1999; Dorchester-on-Thames: ritual complex or ritual landscape?; in Barclay & Harding 1999, 49-66.

Loveday R and Petchey M; 1982; Oblong ditches: a discussion and some new evidence; *Aerial Archaeology* 8, 17 - 24.

Lynch F; 1998; Colour in prehistoric architecture; in Gibson A & Simpson D (Eds); 1998; *Prehistoric ritual and religion*; Stroud: Sutton; 62-8.

MacGregor G, Donnelly MC, Glendinning B, Johnstone LH & Taylor K; 1996; *Excavations at Fox Plantation*; Glasgow: GUARD 225.3.

MacKinley JM; 1895; Traces of river worship in Scottish folk-lore; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 6, 69-70.

MacNeill M; 1976; Dreghorn; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1976, 67.

Mallin SB; 1979; *Merleau-Ponty's philosophy*; London: Yale University Press.

Malmer; 1963; *Metod problem jarnaldherns konsthistoria*; Bonn - Land: Habelt - Gleerup.

Marsac M, Riley D and Scarre C; 1982; Recent discoveries of possible Neolithic long mounds in Western France and their British parallels; *Aerial Archaeology* 8, 1-16.

Maxwell GS; 1979; Air photography and the work of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical monuments of Scotland; *Aerial Archaeology* 2, 37 - 43.

Maxwell GS; 1983a; Air photographs 1982: Strathmore; *Popular Archaeology*, July 1983, 33 - 34.

Maxwell GS; 1983b; Recent aerial survey in Scotland; in Maxwell, GS (Ed); *The impact of aerial reconnaissance in archaeology*; London: CBA Research Report No. 4, 27-40.

Maxwell GS; 1983c; Cropmark categories observed in recent aerial reconnaissance in Scotland; *Scott. Archaeol. Review* 2.1, 45 - 52.

Maynard J; 1993; Irongray Road, Newbridge: henge monument; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1993, 19.

McOmie J; 1784; *Plan of the Roman Wall and camp near Meikleour*; Manuscript copy held in Perth Museum.

Measden GT; 1992; *The Stonehenge solution: sacred marriage and the Goddess*; London: Souvenir Press.

Mercer RJ; 1981; The excavation of a late Neolithic henge-type enclosure at Balfarg, Markinch, Fife, Scotland; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 111, 63-171.



Mercer RJ, Barclay GJ, Jordan D & Russell-White CJ; 1988; The Neolithic henge-type enclosure at Balfarg: a re-assessment of the evidence for an incomplete ditch circuit; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 118, 61-8.

Merleau-Ponty M; 1962; *Phenomenology of perception*; London: Routledge. Translated by Colin Smith.

Moore H; 1990; Paul Ricoeur: action, meaning and text; in Tilley 1990, 85-120.

Myatt L; 1972; The stone rows; in Omand D (Ed); 1972; *The Caithness Book*; Inverness: Highland Printers Ltd.

Norbert-Schultz C; 1980; *Genius loci: towards a phenomenology of architecture*; New York: Rizzoli.

North J; 1996; *Stonehenge. Neolithic man and the cosmos*; London: Harper Collins Publishers.

Nogué i Font J; 1993; Towards a phenomenology of landscape and landscape experience: an example from Catalonia; in Seamon D (Ed); 1993; *Dwelling, seeing and designing: towards a phenomenological ecology*; Albany: State University of New York.

O'Connell M; 1987; The Heathrow / Stanwell cursus; *Current Archaeology* 9, 122-5.

Oudemans ThCW; 1996; Heidegger and archaeology; *Archaeological Dialogues* 3.1, 29-33.

Palmer R; 1976; Causewayed enclosure at Crofton (Great Bedwyn); *Wilts. Arch. Mag.* 70/71, 124-5.

Palmer R & Cox C; 1999; *A sample of recent developer funded work in England*; Unpublished paper given at the AARG conference 1999.

Parker Pearson M; forthcoming; Puzzles, problems and priorities. The dead will not lay quiet; in Ritchie forthcoming.

Parker Pearson M & Ramilisonina; 1998; Stonehenge for the ancestors: the stones pass on the message; *Antiquity* 72, 308-26.

Parker Pearson M & Richards C (Eds); 1994; *Architecture and order: approaches to social space*; London: Routledge.

Patton M; 1996; The phenomenology of the British Neolithic; *Archaeological Dialogues* 3.1, 33-35.

Pennant T; 1776; *A Tour of Scotland 1772*; London.



## Bibliography

Penny A & Wood J; 1973; The Dorset cursus: A Neolithic astronomical observatory; *Archaeol. J.* 44-76.

Perec G; 1997; *Species of spaces and other pieces*; London: Penguin. Translated by John Sturrock.

Piggott S & Piggott CM; 1939; Stone and earth circles in Dorset; *Antiquity* 13, 138-58.

Pryor FMM; 1988; Earlier Neolithic organised landscapes and ceremonial on lowland Britain; in Barrett JC & Kinnes I (Eds); 1988; *The archaeology of context in the Neolithic and Bronze Age: recent trends*; Sheffield: Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, University of Sheffield; 63-72.

Pryor FMM & French CAI; 1985; *Archaeology and environment in the Lower Welland Valley, Volume 2*; Cambridge: Cambridge Archaeological Committee - East Anglian Archaeology 27.

Pryor F & Kinnes I; 1982; A waterlogged causewayed enclosure in the Cambridgeshire Fens; *Antiquity* 56, 124-6.

Rabil Jnr A; 1967; *Merleau-Ponty. Existentialist of the social world*; London: Columbia University Press.

Raczkowski W; 1999; Power of the image: some ideas on post-processual aerial archaeology; *AARGnews* 19, 10-4.

Rampersad A; 1986; *The life of Langston Hughes*; New York: New York University Press.

Reaney D; 1966; A beaker burial at Aston upon Trent; *Derb. Archaeol. J.* 86, 103.

Relph EC; 1976; *Place and placelessness*; London: Pion.

Relph EC; 1981; Phenomenology; in Harvey ME & Holly BP (Eds); 1981; *Themes in geographical thought*; London: Croom Helm; 99-114.

Relph EC; 1996; Place; in Douglas *et al* 1996, 906-22.

Renfrew C; 1973; Monuments, mobilisation and spatial organisation in Neolithic Wessex; in Renfrew C (Ed); *The explanation of culture change: models in prehistory*; 539-58; London: Duckworth.

Renfrew C; 1976; *Before civilisation: the radiocarbon revolution and prehistoric Europe*; Harmondsworth: Penguin

RCAHMS; 1956; *Roxburghshire: an inventory of the prehistoric and Roman monuments*; Edinburgh: HMSO.



RCAHMS; 1978a; *The archaeological sites and monuments of the Lunan Valley and Montrose basin, Angus district, Tayside region*; Edinburgh: RCAHMS.

RCAHMS; 1978a; *Lanarkshire: an inventory of the prehistoric and Roman monuments*; Edinburgh: HMSO.

RCAHMS; 1983; *The archaeological sites and monuments of Central Angus, Angus District, Tayside Region*; Edinburgh: RCAHMS.

RCAHMS; 1992; Report of the Commission; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1992, 89-100.

RCAHMS; 1994; *South-east Perth: an archaeological landscape*; Edinburgh: HMSO.

RCAHMS; 1997; *Eastern Dumfriesshire: an archaeological landscape*; Edinburgh: HMSO.

RCHME; 1960; *A matter of time*; London: HMSO.

RCHME; 1970; An inventory of historical monuments in the County of Dorset; London: HMSO.

Richards C; 1990; The late Neolithic house in Orkney; in Samson, R (Ed); 1990; *The social archaeology of houses*; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Richards C; 1991; Skara Brae: re-visiting a Neolithic village in Orkney; in Hanson & Slater 1991, 24-43.

Richards C; 1993; Monumental choreography: architecture and spatial representation in Late Neolithic Orkney; in Tilley 1993b, 143-78.

Richards C; 1996; Henges and water: towards an elemental understanding of monumentality and landscape in late Neolithic Britain; *Journal of Material Culture* 1.3, 313-36.

Richards C & Thomas J; 1984; Ritual activity and structured deposition in later Neolithic Wessex; in Bradley R & Gardiner J (Eds); 1984; *Neolithic studies: a review of some current research*; Oxford: BAR.

Richards JD; 1990; *The Stonehenge environs project*; London: English Heritage.

Richmond IA; 1940; Excavations on the Estate of Meikleour, Perthshire, 1939; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 74, 37-47.

Ricoeur P; 1981; *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Translated by JB Thompson.

Rideout JS; 1997; Excavation of Neolithic enclosures at Cowie Road, Bannockburn, 1884 - 5; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotl.* 127, 29-68.



Ritchie, A (Ed); forthcoming; *Neolithic Orkney in its European context*; Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

Sacks O; 1985; *The man who mistook his wife for a hat*; London: Picador.

St. Joseph, JK; 1964; Air reconnaissance, Recent results 2; *Antiquity* 38, 290-2.

St. Joseph, JK; 1966; Air reconnaissance, Recent results 4; *Antiquity* 40, 58-9.

St. Joseph, JK; 1976; Air reconnaissance, Recent results 40; *Antiquity* 50, 55-7.

St. Joseph, JK; 1980; Air reconnaissance, Recent results 49; *Antiquity* 54, 47-51.

Sartre JP; 1958; *Being and nothingness*; London: Methuen. Translated by Hazel Barnes.

Saville, A; 1994; *The Den of Boddam project: excavation and survey on the Buchan Ridge gravels, Grampian region, in 1993*; Unpublished interim report.

Schmidt J; 1985; *Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Between phenomenology and structuralism*; Basingstoke: MacMillan Publishers Ltd.

Schutz A; 1967; *The phenomenology of the social world*; Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press. Translated by George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert.

Scott JC; 1988/9; The stone circle at Temple Wood, Kilmartin, Argyll; *Glasgow Archaeol. J.* 15, 53-124.

Seamon D; 1986; Phenomenology and vernacular lifeworlds; in Saile DG (Ed); 1986; *Architecture and cultural change*; Lawrence, Kansas: School of architecture, University of Kansas.

Shanks M; 1992; *Experiencing the past*; London: Routledge.

Shanks M & Tilley C; 1987; *Re-constructing archaeology: theory and practice*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sharples N; 1992; Aspects of regionalisation in the Scottish Neolithic; in Sharples N & Sheridan A (Eds); 1992; *Vessels for the ancestors*; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; 322-31.

Shepherd I & Greig M; 1996; *Grampian's past: its archaeology from the air*; Aberdeen: Economic Development and Planning Department, Grampian Regional Council.

Sherriff JR; 1981; Bonnyton Farm - flints; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1961, 46.

Solway Heritage; 1999; *Archaeosights: Explore the tombs and temples of prehistory*; Solway Heritage.



- Silverman HJ; 1987; *Inscriptions: Between phenomenology and structuralism*; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Spence K; 1999; Red, white and black: colour and building stone in Ancient Egypt; *Camb. Archaeol. J.* 9.1, 114-7.
- Spiegelberg H; 1975; *Doing phenomenology*; Dordrecht: Martinus Hijhoff.
- Steiner G; 1992; *Heidegger*; London: Fontana Press; 2nd edition.
- Stone JFS; 1947; The Stonehenge cursus and its affinities; *Archaeol. J.* 104, 7 - 19.
- Stuart E; 1998; Bonnyton Farm: Lithic scatters; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1998, 16.
- Stukeley W; 1740; *Stonehenge. A temple restor'd to the British Druids*; London: W. Innys and R. Manby.
- Tacon PSC; 1999; All things bright and beautiful: the role and meaning of colour in human development; *Camb. Archaeol. J.* 9.1, 120-3.
- Taun Y-F; 1974; *Topophilia*; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Tavener N; 1987; Bannockburn: The pit and post alignments excavated in 1984 and 1985; *CEU Annual Report* 1987, 71 - 76.
- Terry J; 1997; Upper Largie: prehistoric ritual and funerary complex; *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* 1997, 19-21.
- Terry J; 1998; Excavations at Upper Largie, Kilmartin: prehistoric timber circle complex, 1997; *Historic Argyll* 1998 vol.3, 16-7; Lorn Archaeology and History Society.
- Thom A; 1971; *Megalithic lunar observatories*; Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Thom A, Thom AS & Burl A; 1991; *Megalithic rings - plans and data for 229 monuments in Britain*; Oxford: BAR.
- Thomas AC; 1955; The folklore of the Thornborough henge monuments; in Thomas N 1955, 443-5.
- Thomas J; 1991; *Rethinking the Neolithic*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas J; 1993; The hermeneutics of megalithic space; in Tilley 1993b, 73-98.
- Thomas J; 1996a; *Time, culture and identity*; London: Routledge.
- Thomas J; 1996b; A precis of Time, culture and identity; *Archaeological Dialogues* 3.1, 6-21.



- Thomas J; 1998a; Pict's Knowe, Holywood, and Holm: Prehistoric sites in the Dumfries area; *Current Archaeology* 13, 145-54.
- Thomas J; 1998b; Towards a regional geography of the Neolithic; in Edmonds M & Richards C (Eds); 1998; *Understanding the Neolithic of Western Europe*; Glasgow: Cruithne Press; 37-60.
- Thomas J; 1999; The Holywood cursus complex, Dumfries: an interim account 1997; in Barclay & Harding 1999, 107-15.
- Thomas J & Leivers, M; 1998; *Excavations at Holm, Dumfries and Galloway, 1998. Interim report*; ([www.arch.soton.ac.uk/Research/Dunragit/Holm\\_98.htm](http://www.arch.soton.ac.uk/Research/Dunragit/Holm_98.htm)).
- Thomas J, Fowler C & Leivers, M; 1999; Excavations at Dunragit, Dumfries and Galloway 1999- interim report; ([www.arch.soton.ac.uk/Research/Dunragit/Dunragit\\_99.htm](http://www.arch.soton.ac.uk/Research/Dunragit/Dunragit_99.htm)).
- Thomas N; 1955; The Thornborough circles near Ripon, North Riding; *Yorks. Archaeol. J.* 35, 425-45.
- Tilley C; 1989; Excavation as theatre; *Antiquity* 63, 275-80.
- Tilley C (Ed); 1990; *Reading material culture. Structuralism, hermeneutics and post-structuralism*; Oxford: Blackwell.
- Tilley C; 1991; *Material culture and text: the art of ambiguity*; London: Routledge.
- Tilley C; 1993a; Art, architecture, landscape [Neolithic Sweden]; in Bender 1993, 49-84.
- Tilley, C (Ed); 1993b; *Interpretative archaeology*; Oxford: Berg.
- Tilley C; 1994; *A phenomenology of landscape*; Oxford: Berg.
- Tilley C; 1996; The powers of rocks: topography and monument construction on Bodmin Moor; *World Archaeology* 28.2, 161-76.
- Tilley C; 1999; *Metaphor and material culture*; Oxford: Blackwell.
- Tolan M; 1988; *Pit circles in Scotland. Some possible interpretations*; Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Newcastle.
- Topen D (Ed); 1995; *An archaeological field survey of Cathkin Braes Country Park, Carmunnock Parish, Glasgow District*; Glasgow: ACFA Occasional Paper No. 12, University of Glasgow.
- Topen D; 1996; Recent discoveries on the Cathkin Braes, Glasgow; *Glasgow Archaeological Society Bulletin* 36, 14-20 (Spring 1996).



Topping P; 1982; Excavation at the cursus at Scorton, North Yorkshire 1978; *Yorks. Archaeol. J.* 54, 7 - 21.

Topping P (Ed); 1997; *Neolithic landscapes*; Oxford: Oxbow.

Truckell A; 1984; Some lowland native sites in Western Dumfries-shire and Galloway; in Miket R & Burgess C (Eds); 1984; *Between and beyond the walls*; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Ucko PJ & Layton R (Eds); 1999; *The archaeology and anthropology of landscape: shaping your landscape*; London: Routledge.

Unwin T; 1992; *The place of geography*; Harlow: Longman.

van Reybrouck D; 1996; Towards a Heideggerian archaeology?; *Archaeological Dialogues* 3.1, 2-5.

Vatcher F de M; 1960; Thornborough cursus; *Yorks. Archaeol. J.* 40, 169-82.

Wainright GJ; 1969; A review of henge monuments in the light of recent research; *Proc. Pre. Soc.* 35, 112-33.

Wartowsky MW; 1977; Consciousness, praxis and reality: Marxism vs Phenomenology; in Elliston FA & McCormick P (Eds); 1977; *Husserl: expositions and appraisals*; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press; 304-13.

Watson A & Keating D; 1999; Architecture and sound: an acoustic analysis of megalithic monuments in prehistoric Britain; *Antiquity* 73, 325-36.

Wheeler H; 1970; The Findern cursus; *Derb. Arch. Jour.* 90, 47.

Whittle A & Smith R; 1990; West Kennet; *Current Archaeology* 10, 363-5.

Williams J and Anderson G; 1971; Kirkmahoe, Gallaberry: cursus; *Discovery and excavation Scotland* 1971, 16.

Witcher R; 1997; Roman roads that re-shaped the land; *British Archaeology* 27, 7 (September 1997).

Yates, MJ; 1984; *Bronze Age round cairns in Dumfries and Galloway: an inventory and discussion*; Oxford: BAR.

